

TEACHING THE INDONESIAN HOMILETICS TEACHER HOW TO TEACH PREACHING OLD
TESTAMENT NARRATIVES BY USING A NARRATIVE APPROACH

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To my wife and my friend, Megawati Rusli...

Thank you for supporting me.

To my children

Niko and Samuel

To my merciful God...

Thank you for everything.

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ABSTRACT

Most Indonesian pastors preach by using deductive model for any kind of biblical genres, including Old Testament narrative genres. This happens because since they became seminary students, they were taught only one model sermon by their homiletics teachers. Despite the deductive approach is powerful enough to be used for preaching the text which has deductive structure such as the epistles, it becomes less effective to be used for preaching narrative texts. Unfortunately, the homiletics teachers do not have such understanding so they are not motivated to teach narrative approach.

This thesis-project argues that preaching the Old Testament narrative texts can be more effective by using a narrative approach. And the goal is to help Indonesian homiletics teachers to develop their teaching skill of using the inductive approach so that they can teach this approach to their students. Therefore, this thesis-project is titled "Teaching Indonesian Homiletics Teacher to Teach Preaching Old Testament narratives by using a narrative approach."

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Problem and Its Setting

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Portugal and Spain introduced Christianity to Indonesia in the form of Catholicism. Some of the animistic, Hindu Indonesian population and a handful of Muslims embraced Catholicism. A century later, Presbyterian, Reformed, and Methodist missionaries from Germany, Deutschland, and America arrived in Indonesia and introduced Protestant forms of Christianity.

Catholic and Protestant missionaries not only taught their religious tenets, they also brought and applied their own cultures in the churches they planted. These cultural influences were tangibly seen in many ways from the architecture, structural organizations, liturgy, and even in the preaching of the pastors and priests in Indonesian churches.

The preaching model passed down by the missionaries emphasized the deductive structure. This approach consists of presenting the proposition of the sermon after the introduction, and using a number of “points” as evidence to support the sermon’s proposition. This approach has been preaching’s “golden rule” for hundreds of years in Indonesian churches, especially in traditional (orthodox) and evangelical churches. Biblical texts from various genres, including narrative texts, have generally been preached using this deductive model.

Although the deductive model is quite effective when used to preach texts which have deductive structure such as the epistles, it becomes less effective when

used to preach narrative texts. Unfortunately, according to my observations, Indonesian pastors who regularly preach from narrative texts using the deductive model are more apt to not preach that text as effectively, and they tend to bore their listeners.

This problem in preaching raises questions. Are Indonesian pastors aware of the various genres of the Bible? If so, to what extent are they able to recognize the genre of a given biblical text? What approach might be appropriate in persuading them to utilize the narrative approach to preach Old Testament narrative texts? And, lastly, what will be the motivation for these pastors to continue to use the narrative approach?

It is my desire to teach Indonesian pastors how to preach narrative biblical texts more effectively using a narrative sermon model. Therefore, this thesis-project is titled “Teaching Indonesian Homiletics Teacher to Teach Preaching Old Testament narratives by using a narrative approach.” The goal is to help Indonesian homiletics teacher to develop their teaching skill of using the inductive approach. To achieve that goal, they must first learn how to determine the genre of a biblical text. Second, they must learn how to determine which sermon form is most appropriate to for a given genre. Finally, they must learn how to prepare an inductive sermon to preach a given biblical text that will best be served by the inductive approach.

Overview

Chapter 2 supports this thesis by exploring its biblical and theological framework. Since most Indonesian preachers still have difficulties in finding the message of a text and feel less confident in doing accurate proper exegesis, I

consider necessary to equip homiletics teachers to master exegesis well so that they can teach better Indonesian pastors and seminarians. Therefore, in the second chapter, I will take three different Old Testament narrative passages to be exegeted and present practically a way of doing exegesis to find a message of those passages. Then, in chapter 4, these three exegesis examples will be used to teach the following sessions.

Chapter 3 reviews the pertinent literature. It will discuss the role of the Old Testament narrative genre in interpreting of the narrative passage. The purpose is to make Indonesian homiletics teachers aware of the uniqueness of biblical narrative genre that requires a preacher to interpret a biblical narrative text according to the rules of its genre. Afterward, they are able to teach Indonesian pastors and seminarians to preach Old Testament narrative by using narrative approach.

There are six relevant resources on the topic of biblical narrative interpretation provide a sufficient theoretical background for the study. The first is *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by William W. Klein and Craig L. Blomberg.¹ The second is *The Hermeneutical Spiral* by Grant R. Osborne.² Both of them provide the basics of a solid interpretation of biblical narrative. The third is Richard L. Pratt's *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives*.³ This valuable resource provides a basic understanding on the issues of interpreting Old Testament narratives. And the fourth is Leland Ryken's, *Words of*

¹ William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1993).

² Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991).

³ Richard L. Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1993).

Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible.⁴ The fifth, *Preaching the Old Testament*, edited by Scott M. Gibson, wrote by Jeffrey D. Arthurs,⁵ and the sixth is Robert H. Stein's, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*.⁶

Other important books are Haddon W. Robinson's, *The Development and Delivery of Expository messages: Biblical Preaching*,⁷ Thomas G Long's, *Preaching and the Literary Form of the Bible*,⁸ Sidney Greidanus' *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*,⁹ the work of Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*,¹⁰ and Steven D. Mathewson's, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*.¹¹

The last but not least, four classic books in the biblical narrative literature are *Narrative Art in the Bible* by Shimon Bar-Efrat,¹² *Reading Biblical Narrative* by J. P. Fokkelman,¹³ *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* by Adele Berlin's,¹⁴ and Robert Alter's *Art of Biblical Narrative* which proposes a radical approach to the

⁴ Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003).

⁵ Scott M. Gibson, *Preaching the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006).

⁶ Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997).

⁷ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001).

⁸ Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985).

⁹ Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).

¹⁰ Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987).

¹¹ Steven Mathewson, "Guidelines for Understanding and Proclaiming Old Testament Narratives," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:166 (October 1997).

¹² Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Bloomsbury, IL: T&T Clark, 2004).

¹³ J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative* (Louisville, KY: WJKP, 1999).

¹⁴ Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Warsaw, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994).

Bible, especially biblical narrative texts.¹⁵ In his work, Alter shows that the astonishing literary effects often achieved by the authors of the Bible are the results of art and not of artlessness.

Chapter 4 presents a course for teaching Indonesian pastors and seminarians about preaching Old Testament narratives by using narrative approach. The course consists of three major parts subdivided into eight sessions. The first part discusses the problems of preaching Old Testament narrative texts and the characteristics of the Old Testament narrative texts (two sessions). The second part speaks about grasping the “Big Idea” of an Old Testament narrative text, forming the “Big Idea” and determining the goal of a narrative sermon, composing the plot of a narrative sermon, and developing a sermon plot into a narrative sermon (four sessions). The third part is learning about narrative sermons from some examples and practicing narrative preaching (two sessions).

Finally, chapter 5 evaluates the effectiveness of the teaching experience in enabling and motivating Indonesian homiletics teachers to teach preaching Old Testament narratives by using a narrative approach. Suggestions for further research will also be discussed.

¹⁵ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1981).

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Most Indonesian preachers still have difficulties finding the message of a narrative text. They feel less confident conducting proper exegesis. The purpose of this course is to improve the homiletics teacher's understanding of, and ability to teach, preaching Old Testament narrative texts using a narrative approach so that they will be able to teach Indonesian pastors and seminarians. With this in mind, it is necessary to assist them in finding the message of the text in order to reach the goal of this course.

Therefore, this chapter presents a practical way of exegeting a text to find the message of a narrative passage. It will involve the use of commentaries and other tools. Three different parts of narrative texts for the purpose of this thesis-project, namely, Genesis 22:1-19, 1 Kings 19:1-18, and Haggai 1:1-1. These three stories were chosen as representatives of the Torah, history, and the minor prophets in order to show that the process of finding an intended meaning of the story does not vary much from one genre to the next.

The fourth chapter will discuss the lesson plans for this course, using these three stories as examples in the sections that discuss finding the message of a text, composing the sermon outline, and delivering the narrative sermon. So, participants will learn to prepare a narrative sermon from text to sermon and to delivery.

Abraham Tested: Exegesis of Genesis 22:1-19

Having received the fulfillment of God's promise on the birth of his son, Abraham faced a test from God: God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, his only son, as a burnt offering. The severity of this test cannot be overstated because Abraham had waited for so long to receive God's promise of an heir, finally fulfilled in Isaac. This divine test was intended to prove Abraham's faith: Would he still obey God when God seemed to be working against him and against the covenant?

The whole structure of the narrative focuses so strongly on the Lord's request that the writer apparently sensed the need to dispel any suspense or suspicion about the Lord's real intention. It seems that, although the author did not write about the deep emotion Abraham experienced, this silence may have helped the reader sense how great this test was for Abraham. Finally, the reader could see that Abraham successfully passed the test. He remained faithful to the end and he demonstrated that he loved the Lord more than he loved his son. As a result of this act of faithfulness, the Lord blessed Abraham.

The Unit and the Unity of the Text

The Unit of the Text

The first step for conducting accurate exegesis is to examine whether the narrative text under investigation is a single story unit that is distinct from story before and after. The purpose is to verify that the passage has a spiritual message, or a "big idea". Therefore, one must pay careful attention to the beginning and end of the passage. Is the beginning of the narrative a new scene of the story separated from the

previous section? Is the ending of the narrative the last part of the story separated from the next section?

The story of Abraham's test begins with the phrase, "After these things."¹ This informs the reader of the beginning of a new narrative. The author directly informs the reader that this narrative is about the testing of Abraham's obedience.² The narrative follows three preceding narratives in chapter 11: the birth of Isaac,³ the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael,⁴ and the promise of Abraham to Abimelech.⁵ The narrative that follows the text focuses on the descendant of Nahor.⁶ Therefore, the testing of Abraham described in the narrative may be considered an independent narrative unit that begins at verse 1 and ends at verse 19.

The Unity of the Text

The next step is to check the unity of the narrative text. The aim is to determine whether the story, from beginning to end, is an unified story so that we can be sure that we will find the right message of the story. Generally, the unity of a story may be seen in its plot, which contains scenes involving the introduction, the onset of a problem, the escalation of the conflict, the resolution, and finally the conclusion.

¹ Genesis 22:1.

² Genesis 22:1a.

³ Genesis 21:1-7.

⁴ Genesis 21:8-21.

⁵ Genesis 21:22-34.

⁶ Genesis 22: 20-24.

The unity of the text of is evident in its plot. The narrative begins with God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. The next morning Abraham travels with his son and his two servants to the place God appointed for him to go. That journey carries the narrative from verse 3 through to the end in verse 19. Hence, this drama is set within the context of a journey. Genesis 22:1-19 may be viewed as a single narrative unit distinct from its preceding and succeeding passages.

Structure

The third step is to find the structure of the book in which the text is located, and the structure of the narrative passage that is being investigated. Knowing the structure of the book helps the preacher to grasp the overall picture of what was discussed in the book and the role of the narrative text. Meanwhile, knowing the structure of the narrative also helps the preacher to know the plot and its emphasis so that he can more easily find the message. Introductions to the Old Testament, and commentaries, are useful tools for this step.

Structure of Genesis

- I. Primeval History 1-11
- II. Chosen Family 12-50
 - A. Abraham under call and promise (12-20)
 - B. Isaac and the further test of faith (21-26)
 - 1. Isaac's birth as God's promise (21)
 - 2. ***Series of tests by God to test Abraham's faith (22-26)***
 - C. Jacob and the emergence of Israel (17-36)

D. Joseph and the migration to Egypt (37-50)

Exegetical Outline of Genesis 22:1-19⁷

- I. Prologue: The narrator explains that the ordeal to follow was a test from God (1a)
- II. Ordeal: God commanded Abraham to offer his only and beloved son as a sacrifice on one of the mountains of Moriah (1b-2).
 - A. Call: God called to Abraham (1b).
 - B. Instruction: God commanded Abraham to take his son and offer him as a sacrifice on one of the mountains of Moriah (2).
- III. Obedience: Abraham responded to God's instructions in obedient faith by journeying to the place of worship and preparing Isaac for the sacrifice (3-10).
 - A. Abraham traveled to the place that God had told him and took Isaac alone up to the mountain to worship (3-5).
 - 1. Report: Abraham and his company traveled three days to the place that God had said (3-4).
 - 2. Speech: Abraham instructed the servants to wait while he and Isaac went up to worship (5).
 - B. Abraham prepared to offer Isaac on the mountain as a sacrifice to God (6-10).
 - 1. Report: Abraham and Isaac went together up the mountain (6).

⁷ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 395-396. For the sake of its accuracy and usefulness, Ross' outline is presented as the exegetical outline, but with a different exposition in its details.

2. Dialogue: In response to the question of Isaac about the animal, Abraham explained that God would provide the animal (7-8).
 3. Report: Abraham bound Isaac as the sacrifice and prepared to slay him on the altar (9-10).
- IV. Resolution: The angel of the Lord prevented Abraham from killing his son when the angel saw that he feared God, prompting the patriarch to sacrifice an animal instead of his son and to name the place in commemoration of the provision of the Lord, after which he received a solemn promise of God's blessing (11-18).
- A. Call: The angel of the Lord called Abraham (11).
 - B. Instruction: The angel of the Lord instructed Abraham not to kill his son, because he had demonstrated that he did fear God (12).
 - C. Report: Abraham responded to the divine intervention by sacrificing a ram that the Lord had provided and by commemorating the place with the name "the Lord provides"—to which a proverb was added (13-14).
 1. Abraham offered the ram instead of his son (13).
 2. Abraham named the place, "the Lord provides" (14a).
 3. A proverb was added to this incident: "In the mount of the Lord it will be seen" (14b).
 - D. Blessing: The angel of the Lord swore to fulfill the promises to Abraham and his seed because he did not withhold his son from God (15-18).
- V. Epilogue: Abraham and his company returned to Beersheba (19).

Development of the Exposition

After fitting the passage into the larger context of the book, and constructing the structure of the passage, the preacher must conduct an exposition of the text.

This process includes exploring explanations about the historical-cultural background and the meanings of words. By doing so, the preacher can capture the “big idea” of the passage more precisely. To do this, he can utilize existing tools such as Old Testament introductions, Bible dictionaries, lexicons, and commentaries.

God Tests the Faithfulness of the Believers by Asking Them to Surrender to Him the Best They Have (Gen 22:1-2)

Verse 1 begins with the phrase, “some time later.” It is not easy to determine to what this phrase is referring. It may refer to either the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael, or the covenant Abraham made with Abimelech. However, the narrative suggests that this must account must occur years after the birth of Isaac.

In the first verse, the narrator informs his reader of the story’s theme, God is testing Abraham. He tells the readers that God did not really require child sacrifice as did the pagan gods, but that God was testing Abraham’s total commitment to him. Certainly, Abraham did not know this. He only heard the command, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”⁸

Still, why did God have to say it that way? What he meant to communicate was clear that it was Isaac who would be sacrificed. God emphasized that this was

⁸ Genesis 22:2.

Abraham's son, indeed, his only son (although Abraham had also engendered Ishmael—of Hagar, Sarah's slave—Hagar and Ishmael had since been sent away). It was Isaac, "whom you love."

From Abraham's perspective, God was calling him to do something he would have never imagined. Not only asking Abraham to make a child sacrifice, but God was also asking for the child who would be the heir of the promise. This appeal was clearly out of Abraham's imagination, and beyond his expectation, because it contradicted what God promised, to bless him with descendants as numerous as the stars in the heaven and sands on the seashore, the descendants that would become a great nation.⁹

Although the narrator does not describe in details Abraham's response and struggle, the reader may assume that anyone who is in the same shoe with Abraham would have the same struggle with him. Victor Hamilton feels the intensity of the test, saying,

The intensity of the test is magnified by the three direct objects of the imperative: *your son, your precious son whom you love, Isaac*. Each of the objects hits a little closer to home, as the list moves from the general to the more intimate. This specification is precisely what we encountered when God first spoke to Abraham: "Leave your country, your homeland, your father's house" (12:1), that is, an imperative followed by a series of gradually intensifying terms.¹⁰

⁹ Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 15:5.

¹⁰ Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 17-50*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 101.

**Faithful Believers Are Willing to Surrender the Best They Have to God, Trusting
That the Lord Will Provide (3-10)**

The Faithful Obeys God's Call to Worship (3-5)

Report: Abraham and His Company Traveled Three Days to the Place That God Had Said (3-4). Verse 3, states, "Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey." Abraham did not delay to do what God commanded. He responded immediately. What did Abraham feel when he heard this command? The narrator does not say anything about it, as though allowing the reader's imagination to identify with Abraham's situation.

However, in Hebrew narrative, the feeling of a character often is not described by his or her words, but by his or her actions. The actions of Abraham are described in the following sequence: (1) saddled his donkey; (2) took two servants; (3) took Isaac; (4) split the kindling wood; and (5) set out for Moriah. Accordingly, this sequence of *waw*-consecutives implies Abraham did one thing after another, so it is surprising that he cut the wood *after* saddling his donkey and gathering together his servants and Isaac.¹¹

Why did not Abraham cut the wood first? How can this illogical order be explained? Several possibilities may offer explanations. First, this illogical order may hint at Abraham's confused state of mind. Abraham was confused because God's order breaks his heart. Second, there is a possibility that Abraham was attempting

¹¹ Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 107.

to hide the destination of his journey to the land of Moriah. He did not want Isaac and his two servants to know where to go. Third, Abraham was trying to postpone the act of sacrifice. Gordon J. Wenham states, “he is trying to postpone the most painful part of the preparation till last.”¹² But whatever his state of mind, Abraham did what he was told.

Not a word of conversation is recorded during the three-day journey from Beer-sheba to Moriah. This absence of any speech by Abraham attracts the attention of multiple biblical scholars. One of them, G. Coats, says of the patriarch, “He (Abraham) appears in superhuman, somewhat unrealistic dress. He never objects to the unreasonable, slightly insane commandment to sacrifice his son... To the contrary, he seems to move about his grim task with silent resignation, as if he were an automaton.”¹³

Speech: Abraham Instructed the Servants to Wait While He and Isaac Went up to Worship (5). Seeing “the place,” Abraham stopped and left behind the two young men and the animals, as he and Isaac headed for the final destination. Abraham’s instruction to the two servants has the same ambiguity found in his later words to Isaac. He tells them, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you” (v 5). Here we may interpret the words of Abraham to his servants, “we will worship and return to you,” as an attempt to hide from them and Isaac what would really happen. However, according

¹² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, WBC (Dallas, TX: Word, 1994), 106.

¹³ G. Coats, “Abraham’s Sacrifice of Faith: A Form-Critical Study of Genesis 22,” *Int* 27 (1973) 397, as quoted by Hamilton, *Genesis*, 106.

to what is stated in Hebrews 11:17-19, this was not merely small talk nor an effort on Abraham's part to avoid telling them what was about to take place. On the contrary, this was Abraham's words of faith "that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb 11:19). Therefore, his plan was to return home promptly; if it was not, he would not have dared to face Sarah again, if he were to take Isaac's life.

The Faithful Trusts God to Provide (6-10)

Report: Abraham and Isaac Went up the Mountain Together (6). Seemingly, the narrator slows down the flow of the story, describing in sequenced detail the actions Abraham took. He took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. The purpose for this stylistic approach is to increase the tension of the story. Wenham asserts, "It also implies that the next part of the journey will be the hardest physically and emotionally for both of them."¹⁴

With the wood for the sacrifice placed on Isaac's shoulder, the two of them walk on together in "poignant and eloquent silence."¹⁵ Footsteps seem to be the only sound. Nothing in the narrative detracts attention from the two walking

¹⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 107.

¹⁵ E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis, A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), 165. Speiser gives special attention to linguistic matters, concentrates on providing a careful translation. See also Eugene F. Roop, *Believers Church Bible Commentary: Genesis* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1987), 348.

together. Nothing is known about what they looked at or what they saw, it was just the two of them, the old and the young, a father and his son.

Dialogue: In response to the Question of Isaac About the Animal, Abraham

Explained That God Would Provide the Animal (7-8). The silence broke with Isaac's speech: "'Father?'" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"¹⁶ The question served only to heighten the anguish that the Lord's request brought to Abraham, and now to the reader. When Abraham finally ended his silence and spoke to Isaac for the first time, a hint at an answer is given: he said, "God himself will provide [*'elōhîm yir'eh-llô*] the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."¹⁶ There is no indication that Abraham replied hesitantly or misleadingly, but that reply may also have meant, "I don't know," or, "it will come out right in the end."

Isaac made no response to his father's explanation. Such silence could be read as either satisfaction with Abraham's projection or bewilderment. However, the writer allows the final words of the story to appear and foreshadow the end. The reader is assured of both the outcome of the narrative and the quality of Abraham's faith.¹⁷ The speaking ends. Again, the reader hears only footsteps. All else remains unexpressed: dark, hidden, and unknown.

¹⁶ Genesis 22:8.

¹⁷ John H. Sailhamer, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 168.

Report: Abraham Bound Isaac as the Sacrifice and Prepared to Slay Him on the

Altar (9-10). After the quick passing of a few scenes, the pace of the narrative suddenly slows for the climactic scenes on the mountaintop. The words of the narrator, “when they reached the place God had told him about,” signal the reader that this story was coming to its final scene and the point of greatest tension, the slaughter of Isaac. The tension of this story escalates as the narrator mentioned technical details describing the construction of the altar and other preparations for the sacrifice, including the act of Abraham tying Isaac and laying him on the altar.

The narrative continues, “Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.”¹⁸ This was the beginning of the climax of the story. For the second time, “the knife” was mentioned to emphasize the horror of the action. “Slaughter” (שחט, *šāḥaṭ*) is a sacrificial term that usually indicates the cutting the throat.¹⁹ Hamilton says that, in biblical Hebrew, there are five related verbs for a word “sacrifice:” *šāḥaṭ*, *ṭāḇaḥ*, *zāḇaḥ*, the Hiphil of *ʾālá*, and the Hiphil of *qāraḇ*. However, only “*šāḥaṭ*” and “*ṭāḇaḥ*” were usually used to refer to the slaughter of animals for both secular and sacred purposes. In addition, *šāḥaṭ* was also used to describe the slaughter or sacrifice of children to false gods in pagan cults.²⁰ So, its use in Genesis 22:10, makes Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac assume an even more dreadful aspect.²¹

¹⁸ Genesis 22:10.

¹⁹ Cf. Leviticus 1:5, 11.

²⁰ Isaiah 57:5; Ezekiel 16:21; 23:29.

²¹ Hamilton, *Genesis*, 111.

Abraham was completely willing to plunge the knife into Isaac because his faith was in God's ability to raise Isaac from the dead, not in God's desire to stop the sacrifice. Abraham didn't think this was a drama or play-acting.

Faithful Believers Receive God's Provision for Worship (11-14)

God Approves Sacrificial Obedience (11-12). In verse 11, it is clear that the emphasis of the narrator is mainly on the phrase, "the angel of the Lord called from heaven." Abraham struggled in his heart for three consecutive days, and during those days, he felt that God was not concerned about his struggle. Yet, at the last moment, God, described as "the angel of the Lord," broke onto the stage of the drama. This is the climax of the narrative, indicating that there must be something important and urgent in this moment.

The urgency can be seen in the appearance of the angel of the Lord. This is explained by the repetition of the calling of Abraham's name. This repetition is also used elsewhere in the Bible, when God called Moses, Samuel, and Saul.²² In three of these instances, Yahweh's messenger, God, or simply a voice speaks in order to stop an action the person is about to do.²³ The purpose of the words of the angel of the Lord is to stop Abraham from killing Isaac.

When Abraham heard the angel of the Lord's voice, he replied, "Here I am." The angelic voice continued, "Do not lay a hand on the boy. Do not do anything to

²² Exodus 3:4; 1 Samuel 3:4; Acts 9:4.

²³ Hamilton, *Genesis*, 111. See Genesis 22:11; Exodus 3:4; Acts 9:4. Cf. 22:7; 26:14.

him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” The imperatives, “do not lay,” and “do not do anything to him,” are expressions used to stop the sacrifice. The reason for using these prohibitions is that God knew Abraham feared God. To “fear God” or “the Lord” is a very common expression in the Old Testament that means to honor God in worship and in an upright life. Abraham showed this kind of fear in his obedience to God’s command and in his willingness to give up his only son.

God Provides for His Worshipers (13-14). God’s provision came at the point of Abraham’s total obedience. God did not halt the act of sacrifice; He provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac. From this experience, it was evident that Abraham’s faith that God would provide a sacrificial offering was honored and God did indeed provide.²⁴ Abraham took the ram, and he offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. All the while, God still required a sacrifice. God did not call off the sacrifice. Instead, he provided a substitutionary sacrifice in Isaac’s stead.

The following verse states, “Abraham called that place the Lord will provide (*Jehovah Jireh*). And to this day it is said, ‘on the mount of the Lord it will be provided.’”²⁵ The word, “Jireh” can be a word play in Hebrew for “to see,” as in 22:8; it is normally translated “provide.” It may also play on the word, “fear,” or “obey.” So, this may be the place where “Yahweh is seen,” “Yahweh is obeyed,” or “Yahweh

²⁴ Genesis 22:8.

²⁵ Genesis 22:14.

provides;" it may be all of these. In the context of this event, it remains a place beyond naming.²⁶

Faithful Believers Enjoy the Assurance of God's Blessing (15-18)

After Abraham sacrificed a ram as a substituted offering for Isaac, the angel of the Lord called out from heaven to Abraham second time. "A second time" underlines the importance of what is about to be said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son." God swore by himself in giving testimony. By saying "by myself," according to Wenham, God gave the oath a special solemnity and weight.²⁷ The author of Hebrews picks up this idea, saying, "When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself."²⁸

God reiterated the promised blessings, but added the solemn oath. The oath itself began with "Because you have done this" and ended with "because you have obeyed (Heb. *shama*, "to heard") me." In substance, they are not much different from what has previously promised,²⁹ "but there is also an addition to the promise of blessing. God had promised to make Abraham's descendants "as numerous as the stars of heaven."³⁰ Now, God made this promise even more emphatic by adding,

²⁶ Roop, *Genesis*, 147.

²⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 111. See Jeremiah 22:5; 49:13; Amos 4:2; 6:8.

²⁸ Hebrews 6:13.

²⁹ Cf. Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 15:5, 13-16; 17:1-8, 15-16, 19-21.

³⁰ Genesis 15:5.

“and as the sand that is on the seashore.” God had promised to give the land of Canaanites to Abraham’s descendants.³¹ Now God added, “And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies.” God had promised, “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”³² Now God promised, “Through your offspring [seed] all the nations on earth will be blessed.” Sidney Greidanus infers that this promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ,

That seed was first of all Isaac, Jacob, and then Joseph. Joseph was a blessing to the nations when he saved them from famine. We read later in Genesis, “all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain” (41:57). But ultimately the “seed” was Jesus Christ, “the son of Abraham” (Mat 1:1) through whom all nations would be blessed because he was “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).³³

Moreover, in previous instances these promises were made unconditionally; now the blessings are promised Abraham because he obeyed God in this test. It would seem that the supreme act of obedience on Abraham’s part drew forth the supreme promise of blessing from God. As Meyer says, “There is nothing, indeed, which God will not do for a man who dares to step out upon what seems to be the mist; though as he puts down his foot he finds it rock beneath him.”³⁴

³¹ Genesis 12:7.

³² Genesis 12:3.

³³ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 212.

³⁴ F. B. Meyer, *Abraham: The Obedience of Faith* (New York, NY: Revell, n.d.), 180, in James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 707.

Epilogue: Abraham and His Company Return to Beersheba (19)

The narrative ends when Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. Then, Abraham stayed in Beersheba. The journey from Moriah to Beersheba would take minimum period of six days. Here, no mention is made of Isaac, but there is no doubt that he returned home with Abraham.

The Big Idea of the Text

After obtaining the necessary information, it is time to identify the "Big Idea" of the passage (the exegetical idea). The "Big Idea" of the passage is the main message of the story as intended by the original author for the first readers. Although, there is no guarantee that the preacher will always find the right "Big Idea", at the very least, he will have summarized it responsibly based on the information that has been gathered, not in a random fashion.

Based on the steps above, I conclude that the "Big Idea" of Genesis 22:1-19 is "the Lord tested Abraham's faithfulness by asking Him to sacrifice his begotten and beloved son Isaac."

The Big Idea of the Sermon

After identifying the "Big Idea" of the narrative, the exegetical process is complete. Now, we enter the next stage, how we communicate the "Big Idea" of the narrative to our listeners. For that, we must first change the "Big Idea" of the narrative into the "Big Idea" of the sermon (the homiletical idea) so that the message of the narrative can be relevant truth to our listeners today.

Based on the "Big Idea" of Genesis 22:1-19, I compose the "Big Idea" of the sermon as follows: "Sometimes God tests his chosen people's faithfulness by asking them to sacrifice something that they loved most."

Elijah Flees to Horeb: Exegesis of 1 Kings 19:1-18

Following a dramatic climax to his ministry in his confrontation with the worshippers of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah was in the midst of a personal crisis. He wanted to terminate both his prophetic ministry and his life. The catalyst for this personal crisis was due to the threats he received from Jezebel, the royal patron of the Baal prophets. She had dispatched a messenger to inform him that she would have his life.

Suddenly the prophet, who trusted in the omnipotent God to set water on fire to defeat 450 prophets of Baal, was scared and he fled south, out of Israel into Judah with his servant, before continuing alone further south beyond Judah. The point of the story is not just that Elijah made a physical trip to Mount Sinai because the meaning goes much deeper. Elijah was in crisis, and he wanted to terminate both his prophetic ministry and his life. In an act of sheer grace God intervened, provided the prophet with life-giving food and water, and told him to return to his ministry with a new commission.

The Unit and the Unity of the Text

The Unit of the Text

This account follows the heroic story of the prophet following his encounter with and termination of the 450 Baal prophets. Following the death of the prophets, verse 1 opens a new episode with a scene that recounts Ahab's report to Jezebel of the Mt. Carmel events. Following this episode, verse 19 begins a new episode, stating, "So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat." This pericope is commonly known as the calling of Elisha, Elijah's successor. So, the story of Elijah flight to Horeb could be considered as an independent narrative unit that begins at verse 1 and ends at verse 18.

The Unity of the Text

The plot of this story reveals the unity of the text. It begins with the report of king Ahab about what Elijah did to Baal prophets and the threat of Jezebel to take Elijah's life as he did to Baal prophets.³⁵ Upon hearing this, Elijah was afraid and fled to Beersheba, where he left his servant. In verse 4, he continued his escape by hiding in the wilderness in a remote place, a day's journey from town. Surprisingly, in that place, he surrendered the life he was so anxious to save. In his twofold complaint, he stated that his enemies were seeking his life, to take it away.³⁶ Finally,

³⁵ 1 Kings 19:1-2.

³⁶ 1 Kings 19: 10, 14.

God met Elijah where he was, restored him wholly, and commissioned him to return to his ministry with a new task, to anoint three persons—Hazeal, Jehu, and Elisha.

Another clue to the unity of the text is the occurrence of the repetitive and similar question and answer formula.³⁷ The question, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” repeated again in verse 13, was answered in the same form, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”³⁸

Such a pattern is important because it shows the core issue of the story, the frustration and fear of the prophet for being alone in standing for God. Finally, the story closes with God telling Elijah that he will leave seven thousand people in Israel, those who have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him. This statement aims to answer Elijah’s main concern that he was the only person in the land who remained faithful to God. Thus, 1 Kings 19:1-18 seems to be a single independent unit that has its own unique theme.

³⁷ 1 Kings 19:9, 10, 13, and 14.

³⁸ 1 Kings 19:10, 14.

Structure

Structure of 1 Kings³⁹

Conclusion to the Throne-Succession Narrative (1:1–2:46)

Solomon Becomes King (1:1–53)

Solomon Disposes of His Rivals (2:1–46)

Account of Solomon's Reign (3:1–11:43)

Solomon's Divine Legitimation (3:1–15)

The King's Wise Act of Justice (3:16–28)

The Administration of Solomon's Empire (4:1–5:14 [Eng. 4:1–34])

The Preparation of Materials for Solomon's Temple (5:15–32 [Eng. 5:1–18])

The Construction of Solomon's Temple (6:1–7:1)

The Construction of the Palace Complex (7:2–12)

Hiram's Artifacts for the Temple (7:13–51a)

The Dedication of the Temple (7:51b–9:9)

Notable Events of Solomon's Reign (9:10–25)

Solomon's Wealth and Wisdom (9:26–10:29)

Solomon's Numerous Wives and Their Influence (11:1–13)

Three Potential Rivals: Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam (11:14–43)

Account of the Two Kingdoms up to Ahab (12:1–16:34)

The Rejection of Rehoboam (12:1–24)

Jeroboam's Religious Innovations (12:25–32)

³⁹ Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings*, WBC, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2003), v-ix.

The Prophecy against the Bethel Altar (12:33–13:34)

The Death of Jeroboam's Child (14:1–20)

Excursus: The Chronology of the Hebrew Kings

The Reign of Rehoboam (14:21–31)

The Reign of Abijam (15:1–8)

The Reign of Asa (15:9–24)

The Reign of Nadab (15:25–31)

The Reign of Baasha (15:33–16:7)

The Reign of Elah (16:8–14)

The Reign of Zimri (16:15–22)

The Reign of Omri (16:23–28)

The Reign of Ahab (16:29–34)

Narratives of the Prophets in Elijah's Time (17:1–22:40)

The Elijah Narratives: Composition and Redaction

Elijah Challenges Baal (17:1–16; 18:1–18, 41–46)

Reviving the Sick Lad (17:17–24)

The Contest with the Baal Prophets (18:19–40)

Yahweh Renews Elijah's Authority (19:1–18)

Elisha's Call (19:19–21)

Three Narratives from the Omride-War Cycle (20:1–43a)

The Narrative of Naboth's Judicial Murder (20:43b–21:29)

Two Narratives of Micaiah's Unfavorable Oracle (22:1–40)

The Reign of Jehoshaphat (22:41–51 [Eng 22:41–50])

The Reign of Ahaziah, Son of Ahab (22:52–54 [Eng. 22:51–53])

The Reign of Jehoshaphat (22:41–51 [Eng. 22:41–50])

The Reign of Ahaziah, Son of Ahab (22:52–54 [Eng. 22:51–53])

Exegetical Outline of 1 Kings 19:1-18

- I. Elijah flees from the world and prophetic ministry (1-7)
 - A. The curse of Jezebel (1–2)
 - B. Elijah’s flight to the desert (3-4)
 - C. The comfort of the Lord when Elijah collapsed (5–7)
- II. God Reassures Elijah (8–18)
 - A. The confrontation from the Lord (8–14)
 - B. The new commissioning by the Lord (15–18)

Development of the Exposition

Elijah Flees From the World and Prophetic Ministry (1–7)

The Curse of Jezebel (1 Ki 19:1–2)

The euphoria of Elijah’s victory over the Baal prophets described in chapter eight suddenly disappears when Ahab’s wife, Jezebel, sent her messenger to inform him of her oath to make him like the slaughtered prophets—“dead by this time tomorrow.”⁴⁰ Simon J. DeVries says, “‘By this time tomorrow,’ כעת מחר is a threat

⁴⁰ 1 Kings 19:2.

formula; cf. Exod 9:18.”⁴¹ “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if ...” is a common form of oath.⁴² Jezebel does not deploy a battalion of armies to arrest Elijah, but she sends a single envoy with a threatening message. It is remarkable that Jezebel’s threat terrified Elijah as it did. Ironically, by contrast, he had just demonstrated that the gods to whom she now appealed in her curse had no power at all. Evidently, Elijah’s fear sprang from the power Jezebel possessed.

Elijah’s Flight to Desert (3-4)

Rather than resting in God for His protection as he had for the past three and one-half years, Elijah ran for his life to Beersheba about one hundred miles away, at the southern boundary of Judah. It happened about 873-852 B.C. when Ahab reigned. At the end of verse 3, the writer states, “Elijah left his servant there.” Although it is difficult to infer why Elijah left his servant there, three possible reasons may explain the act. First, Elijah was quite anxious that Jezebel’s spies would finally find him if they were travelling together. He felt that it was safer to keep his identity secret if he travelled alone. Second, a person in despair characteristically seeks private space and solitude. As a result, Elijah would have an opportunity to pour out his heart before God alone in the desert. Third, he thought he should have no further need of his servant because he wanted to die. So, this is a suicide attempt because no one can live long in the harsh wilderness south of Beersheba. Based on the context of the story, it seems that the third possibility fits

⁴¹ DeVries, *1 Kings*, 235.

⁴² See Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *First and Second Kings* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1991), 99. See Ruth 1:17; 1 Samuel 14:44; 1 Kings 2:23.

the situation faced by the prophet. This may be supported by the prophet's own plea, "It is enough; now, o Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers."⁴³

The Comfort of the Lord When Elijah Collapsed (5–7)

Elijah continued south a day's journey to a bleak and uninhabited desert. In terms of geography, he is safe—he is in the land where Jezebel does not rule. In terms of time, he is safe—Jezebel's death threat was supposed to be fulfilled by this time. At length, he rested under a broom tree. The broom tree (*retama raetum*) is one of the trees that can grow in the great wilderness. Its height can reach ten feet. This particular tree may have been the only shade available to Elijah for several miles.⁴⁴

Elijah was so tired and depressed, he prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life," then he gave his reason, "I am no better than my ancestors."⁴⁵ The combination of emotional burnout in ministry, weariness with nights and days of travel, awful solitude and silence of the great desert, hunger, a deep sense of failure, and a lack of faith in the Lord, brought Elijah into deep depression. His depression reached its lowest point, but there was also an element of pride and self-pity involved.

What does it mean when Elijah said, "I am no better than my ancestors"? God never asked him to be better than anybody else. It could be that Elijah felt that

⁴³ 1 Kings 19:4.

⁴⁴ John Monson, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 82.

⁴⁵ 1 Kings 19:4.

he was better than his his ancestors, including the prophets before him. Moreover, after his courageous ministry on Mount Carmel, perhaps he thought he would make a difference in the life of Israel. Perhaps, he thought Ahab and Jezebel would repent and turn from Baal to Jehovah so that he believed he was far better than his ancestors. However, in reality, his experience did not line up with his expectation, and he considered this a failure. Elijah forgot the lessons God taught him at Kerith, Zarephath, and Carmel. His eyes were on his circumstances rather than on the Lord.

The passage continues, "Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep." When the heart is heavy and the mind and body are weary, sometimes the best remedy is sleep. So it was for Elijah. But while the prophet was asleep, the Lord sent an angel to care for his needs.⁴⁶ This verse mentions "an angel," but in verse 7, the same angel is called "the angel of the Lord." DeVries said that "angel of Yahweh" means Yahweh's emissary.⁴⁷ The angel of the Lord touched him and said, "Get up and eat." Elijah woke up, ate and drank and then lay down again. This indicates that he has not yet recovered from his lethargy. Once again, the angel woke Elijah, perhaps after he had slept for some time, and urged him to eat more food. During this second encounter, the angel explained the reason why Elijah must eat, "because the way is too much for you."

⁴⁶ 1 Kings 19:4.

⁴⁷ DeVries, *1 Kings*, 235.

God Reassures Elijah (8–18)

The Confrontation from the Lord (8–14)

After waking, eating and drinking, Elijah's strength was restored. He then walked forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. This would remind readers of Moses and the Israelites who had traveled in that wilderness for 40 years, sustained by the manna God had provided, learning lessons of his faithful care and provision. Now, Elijah would traverse the same desert for forty days and nights, sustained by the bread God provided.

In some Old Testament traditions, Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai. The geographical setting of the story is important because Horeb was associated with God's meeting with Moses when he received his initial call from God.⁴⁸ It was the place associated with covenant-making, God's revelation of the Torah, and the construction of the tabernacle (Deut 4:10, 15; 5:2; cf. Exod 19-20). Although historical geography has not been able to locate the place with certainty, the important point is that the prophet has gone to the holy mountain of divine revelation and takes up residence in a cave.⁴⁹ Elijah is portrayed as a second Moses who makes a pilgrimage to Sinai. Forty days and nights at Mount Sinai recalls the two sojourns of Moses on Sinai for forty days and nights.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Exodus 3:1.

⁴⁹ Fred B. Craddock, John H. Hayes, Carl R. Holladay, Gene M. Tucker, *Preaching Through the Christian Year: Year C* (Valley Forge, PA: TPI, 1994), 305-6.

⁵⁰ Exodus 24:18; 34:28.

Elijah arrived at Horeb and spent the night in a cave. After an unspecified time, the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the form of a question “What are you doing here, Elijah?”⁵¹ The tone of the question, and the fact that it is repeated later in the story,⁵² suggests that the question is a reproach.⁵³ The word “here” (i.e., Horeb) stands in contrast to the land of Israel from which Elijah had fled. It contrasts escape and responsibility, and the question is reproof in nature. Elijah is where he has no business being.⁵⁴

Elijah replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”⁵⁵ Elijah did not reply to God’s question; instead, he revealed both pride and self-pity, and in using the pronoun “they,” he exaggerated the size of the opposition. He made it appear as though every last Jew in the Northern Kingdom had turned against him and the Lord. The “I am the only one left” refrain implies he was indispensable to God’s work.⁵⁶ It is clear that he expected, not God’s question, but a well-done-good-and-faithful-servant commendation and expressions of compassion for his hardship.

⁵¹ 1 Kings 19:9.

⁵² 1 Kings 19:13.

⁵³ Gene Rice, *1 Kings, Nations Under God*, ITC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 158; Terence E. Fretheim, *Westminster Bible Companion: First and Second Kings*, (Louisville, KY: WJK, 1999), 109.

⁵⁴ Rice, *1 Kings*, 158.

⁵⁵ 1 Kings 19:10.

⁵⁶ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Responsible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 147.

God did not respond directly to Elijah, but commanded the prophet to leave the cave and to “stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord.”⁵⁷ Then, God manifested himself. Rice says, “the way God chooses to manifest himself is an integral part of the revelation he wishes to communicate.”⁵⁸ As an example, he continues, “When God reveals himself to Isaiah sitting upon a throne and wearing a royal robe (Isa 6), it is his kingship he wants to convey. Here the theophany begins in a manner reminiscent of the revelation to Moses and the liberated Israelites (Exod 19:16–19; 20:18; Deut 4:11–12; 5:22–26) but ends in an unexpectedly different way.”⁵⁹

God commanded Elijah to go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, but Elijah did not obey. It seems that he remained in the cave,⁶⁰ and only later did he go out and stand at the entrance of the cave.⁶¹ With Elijah standing there, God passed by with great dramatic power.⁶² Elijah witnessed a wind so powerful that it shattered mountains and rocks, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. These events, of course, remind Elijah of Moses’ encounter with God’s theophany at Sinai that involved

⁵⁷ 1 Kings 19:11.

⁵⁸ Wiersbe, *Be Responsible*, 159.

⁵⁹ Wiersbe, *Be Responsible*, 159.

⁶⁰ Cf. 1 Kings 19:9.

⁶¹ Cf. DeVries, *Word*, 235; Wiersbe, *Be Responsible*, 147.

⁶² Cf. Exodus 33:22, 34:6.

earthquake,⁶³ fire,⁶⁴ and rock.⁶⁵ In all of these dramatic phenomena, however, God was not there until he heard the sound of a gentle whisper.

After this dramatic display of power, there was “a still, small voice.” This may also be translated, “a gentle whisper, a tone of a gentle blowing.” When the prophet heard that sound, he stepped out of the cave and met the Lord. The mighty power and the great noise of the previous exhibitions did not stir Elijah, but when he heard the still, small voice, he recognized the voice of God.

The many translations of the expression “quiet, thin voice” indicate that we are not entirely certain what it means. The Hebrew word (qol) means either “sound” or “voice,” and the first adjective used to describe the voice/sound (demama) denotes quietness, stillness, or even silence. The second modifier (daqqa) refers to something that has been made fine or thin. The implication is that the voice, or sound, through which God spoke was barely audible. This was a stark contrast to the phenomena which preceded the voice.

Various dramatic phenomena played a significant role in Elijah’s ministry in the past at Kerith, Zarephath and Carmel, but now the Lord wanted Elijah to understand that He still existed and worked, even in the stillness.⁶⁶ Rice similarly argues that “The Lord also wants Elijah to understand that the divine presence does not require outward, tangible expressions. It may be manifested imperceptibly and perceived inwardly and spiritually. This is the significance of the still, small voice and

⁶³ Exodus 19:18.

⁶⁴ Exodus 19:18; Deuteronomy 5:22-26; 18:16.

⁶⁵ Exodus 33:17-34:7.

⁶⁶ Rice, *1 Kings*, 159.

the point of the comparison and contrast with the original theophany on Horeb/Sinai.”⁶⁷ When God showed Elijah that He left seven thousand people in Israel who were still faithful to Him and who did not worship Baal,⁶⁸ it seems that God himself wanted to prove that in such tranquility, He and His presence was still there.

Recognizing this as a revelation of God, Elijah pulled his cloak over part of his face, walked out to the mouth of the cave, and stood there waiting for God to act. God asked the same question he asked earlier in verse 9, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” Rice argues, “The repetition of this question confirms that God is concerned to correct a serious misconception on the part of Elijah.”⁶⁹ The prophet’s response was identical to his first reply in verse 10 suggesting that although he may have understood the point of God’s display of natural forces for his benefit, he still felt the same way about himself. DeVries interpreted that his repeated complaint in verse 14 is an implicit confession that no strength for ministry remains in him and must therefore come from God himself.”⁷⁰

The New Commissioning by the Lord (15–18)

Even though Elijah was feeling down, frustrated, and ready to quit his prophetic ministry, in Horeb, God told him to return to ministry in the Wilderness of Damascus. This ministry centered on the anointing of three people. First, he would

⁶⁷ Rice, *1 Kings*, 162.

⁶⁸ 1 Kings 19:18.

⁶⁹ Rice, *1 Kings*, 160.

⁷⁰ DeVries, *Word*, 235.

anoint Hazael to be king over Syria in order to punish the disobedience of Israel;⁷¹ (2) He would anoint Jehu to be the king over Israel and the judge for the house of Ahab;⁷² and (3) He would anoint Elisha as his own successor.⁷³ Elisha was the only one of the three whom Elijah would personally anoint. Yet, Elijah must have directed his successor, Elisha, to fulfill the Lord's command to anoint Hazael and Jehu because these anointings occurred after Elijah's home calling.⁷⁴

The three individuals whom God asked Elijah to anoint were not special nor did they possess any important status in society at that time. Hazael was a servant to King Bed-hadad, Jehu was a captain of the army, and Elisha was a farmer. Yet, by the time Elisha and Jehu completed their work, Baal worship was almost wiped out in Israel.⁷⁵ Consequently, total victory would come as a result of an ordinary political process (a "whisper"), as God removed certain kings and established others; it would not only come as a result of spectacular demonstrations of divine power (wind, earthquake, and fire) as at Carmel.⁷⁶ Although he is always free to work in supernatural ways, God has ways of working other than through the spectacular. God called Elijah to stop weeping over the past and to stop running away from the present. It was time for him to start preparing others for the future.

⁷¹ 2 Kings 8:7-15.

⁷² 2 Kings 9:1-13.

⁷³ 1 Kings 19:19-21.

⁷⁴ 2 Kings 8:7ff; 9:1ff.

⁷⁵ Wiersbe, *Be Responsible*, 150. 2 Kings 10:18-31.

⁷⁶ 1 Kings 18:20-40.

God not only sent Elijah to recruit new workers, he also gave him the assurance that his work, and their work, would not be in vain. God used the swords of Hazeel and Jehu, and the words and works of Elisha, to accomplish his purposes in the land. Rice suggests, “the commission..., then, is an affirmation of Elijah. It means that he had not failed; rather, Ahab and Israel had failed. At Carmel Israel had the opportunity to choose life and blessing. Because of Ahab’s indecision they chose the curse and death (Deut 30:15–20). God’s purpose would now be accomplished through judgment.”⁷⁷ Even more, there were still seven thousand people in the land whose knees had not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths had not kissed him (v 18). Such news undoubtedly cheered Elijah because he was not alone.

It is important to note that biblical commentators have different views on the meaning of the term “the seven thousand.” Keil and Delitzsch argued that the total number of seven thousand is a real total number of people.⁷⁸ Donald J. Wiseman believed that such a number may be symbolic of a perfectly complete and not insignificant number.⁷⁹ In the same vein, Dan Epp-Tiessen said, “Given that the numbers *seven* and *one thousand* are often symbolic numbers of completeness in the Bible (Gen 4:15; Exod 12:15; Josh 6:4; Acts 6:3; Exod 20:6; Deut 1:11; Rev 20:3), *seven thousand* emphasizes the substantial size of the nucleus of God’s

⁷⁷ Rice, *1 Kings*, 161.

⁷⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 182.

⁷⁹ Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, TOTC, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 186.

faithful community.”⁸⁰ Seemingly, the last view is more logical and consistent to the common interpretation of biblical numbers.

Kissing Baal was the most usual form in which this idol was worshipped. It consisted not merely in throwing kisses with the hand (cf. Job 31:27, and Plin. *h. n.* 28, 8), but also in kissing the images of Baal, probably on the feet (cf. Cicero *in Verr.* 4, 43).⁸¹

The Big Idea of the Text

“When Elijah was in crisis and wanted to terminate both his prophetic ministry and his life, God commanded him to return and accomplish well his ministry.”

The Big Idea of the Sermon

“If God wants us to remain in a hard ministry, let us not escape.”

The Command to Rebuild the Temple: Exegesis of Haggai 1:1-11

According to Jeremiah 25:11–12, the people of Judah went into Babylonian captivity for disobeying God. The first dispersion began in 605 BCE and it continued into 597 BCE. The final dispersion was in 586 BCE and resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Cyrus, the Persian ruler, then conquered Babylon in 539 BCE and subsequently issued a decree for the Jews to return to the Israel to rebuild

⁸⁰ Spring 2006 · Vol. 35 No. 1, p. 40. Available at <http://www.directionjournal.org/35/1/index.html>.

⁸¹ C.F. Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 182.

the Temple.⁸² The return to the land was completed in 536 BCE under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest.

After returning from captivity, the Jews began to rebuild the temple. However, they set aside the work for a time, and instead, they started to build their own houses. After a sixteen-year delay in the rebuilding the temple,⁸³ Haggai reminded the people to put God first. He called them to consider what was happening to the land. They were in the midst of a crop failure, drought, and high inflation.⁸⁴ Why had all this evil come upon them? Haggai reasoned that it was because they had neglected the temple.⁸⁵ He exhorted them to go to the mountains for timbers to rebuild the temple, the place where Yahweh might take pleasure in it and be glorified.

The Unit and the Unity of the Text

The Unit of the Text

This narrative of “a call to build the house of the Lord” can be divided into two related subsections: the command to rebuild the temple,⁸⁶ and the people’s favorable response.⁸⁷ The first subsection begins with an adverb of time, “in the

⁸² Ezra 1:2-4; 6:3-5.

⁸³ Ezra 4:5.

⁸⁴ Haggai 1:5-6, 11.

⁸⁵ Haggai 1:9.

⁸⁶ Haggai 1:1-11.

⁸⁷ Haggai 1:12-15.

second year of the King Darius.” This expression usually denotes the beginning of a unit.⁸⁸ The second subsection narrates the Jews’ response to God’s reprimanding. This is a continuation of the first narrative, which has a different theme. As a result, these two parts can be studied and preached separately. So, the narrative in Haggai 1:1-11 may be considered as an independent unit.

The Unity of the Text

The unity of the text focused on the divine instruction to rebuild the temple is marked with the existence of a tightly woven plot. It begins during the second year of King Darius’s reign when the word of God came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judea and to Joshua, the priest. Haggai revealed that God reprimanded the people neglected the rebuilding of the temple. Rather, they were more concerned with building their own houses. Finally, God had to reveal the consequences of their own deed.

Several key words recur throughout the story such as “say,” “word,” “time,”⁸⁹ “house,”⁹⁰ and “build,”⁹¹ suggesting unity within this text. In addition, the situation involving the temple is expressed in three parallel statements in verses 2, 4, and 9: the temple remained a ruin while the people lived in adorned houses. Another literary device appearing in 1:6, 10–11 is a synthetic parallelism. Finally, repetition, such as the statement, “give careful thought,” is used effectively to hold the text

⁸⁸ Cf. Haggai 2:1, 10, 20.

⁸⁹ Haggai 1:2, 4.

⁹⁰ Haggai 1:2, 4, 8, 9.

⁹¹ Haggai 1:2, 8.

together⁹². Although Haggai 1:1-11 is the first part of 1:12-15, this is an independent narrative part with its own unique theme.

Structure

Structure of Haggai

- I. The First Message: The Command to Rebuild the Temple (1:1–11)***
 - A. Superscription (1)
 - B. God Answers the People's Excuse (2–4)
 - C. God Sums Up the Plight of the People (5–6)
 - D. God Gives Reasons for Their Distress (7–11)
- II. Positive Response of Zerubbabel and the People (1:12–15a)***
 - A. The Leaders and People Listen and Obey (12)
 - B. The Lord Empowers the Workers (13–15a)
- III. Second Message: The Glossy of the New Temple Defined (1:15b-2:9)***
 - A. Superscription (15b)
 - B. Comparison with Solomon's Temple (1–3)
 - C. Encouragement for the Builders (4–5)
 - D. God's Supply of Glory for the New Temple (6–9)
- IV. Third Message: Blessing for a Defiled People (2:10–19)***
 - A. Superscription (10)
 - B. The Contagious Nature of Sin (11–13)

⁹² Haggai 1:5, 7.

- C. The Unclean Condition of Israel (14)
- D. Economic Disaster for Failure to Build the Temple (15–17)
- E. Economic Blessing Accompanies Temple Building (18–19)
- V. Fourth Message: The Promise Concerning Zerubbabel (2:20–23)
 - A. Superscription (20)
 - B. The Overthrow of the Nations (21–22)
 - C. The Exaltation of Zerubbabel (23)

Exegetical Outline of Haggai 1:1-11

The Command to Rebuild the Temple (1:1–11)

- I. Superscription (1)
- II. God Answers the People’s Excuse (2–4)
- III. God Sums Up the Plight of the People (5–6)
- IV. God Gives Reasons for Their Distress (7–11)

Development of the Exposition

Superscription (Hag 1:1)

Verse 1 functions as a superscription, explaining the time when the event occurred, that is, “in the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month.” The sixth month in Hebrew is the month Elul. This would correspond to August 29, 520 BC.⁹³ During the exile, the Jewish people adopted the Assyrian-Babylonian method of calculating the year, from spring to spring. Accordingly, the ceremony of New Year’s

⁹³ Robert L. Alden, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Haggai*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 579.

Day, as described in Leviticus 23:24–25 and Numbers 29:1–6, is placed at the beginning of the “seventh month” to connote a curious blend of the old and new calendars.⁹⁴

In addition, this verse contains a messenger formula, “the word of the Lord came.” This is the adverbial definition of the addressee, “to Zerubbabel,” and the indication of the instrument through whom the word of the Lord was communicated “through the prophet Haggai.”⁹⁵ Verhoef pinpoints, “In this way the formula of revelation obtained an objective and real character; the word did not originate in the mind of the prophet, but occurred, manifested itself, and thus was received and communicated by the prophet.”⁹⁶

The word of God was given to two leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua. Although Joshua’s proper name is not mentioned in verse 1, from verse 4 onwards it becomes clear that everyone is involved. Zerubbabel and Joshua are two leaders of the early Jewish community, who led groups of returning exiles at the beginning of Darius’s reign.⁹⁷ Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, was the leading figure during the return of the exiles beginning with the decree of Cyrus in 538.⁹⁸ As a descendant of David, his royal lineage was a key factor in his leadership role and in his messianic association in Haggai 2:20–23. The name Zerubbabel, which means “seed of Babylon,” highlights

⁹⁴ Carroll Stuhlmueller C. P., *A Commentary on the Books of Haggai and Zechariah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 18.

⁹⁵ Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 20.

⁹⁶ Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 45.

⁹⁷ Ezra 3:2, 8; 5:2, 10.

⁹⁸ Ezra 2:1–2.

his role as the representative of the community that had experienced the exile in Mesopotamia.⁹⁹

God Answers the People's Excuse (2–4)

After the superscription, the prophetic message begins by linking the message to “the Lord Almighty.” This divine name occurs consistently throughout the book. The term “Lord” (Heb. *yhwh*) is the name of God revealed to the Israelites through Moses as he entered into covenant with this people.¹⁰⁰ This is his covenant name. The word “Almighty,” or “of hosts” (Heb. *sebaot*) may be understood as an act of mustering the army, where the “army” or “host” can refer to the angels, the stars, or the nation Israel. This emphasizes that God controls all of them, and yet, the all-powerful One confronts a reluctant nation. However, according to Mark J. Boda, the consistent use of this word in prophetic material in general, and in the Persian period prophetic books in particular, reveals that this name of God has lost all connection with the context of war and is a name that speaks mainly of the might and power of God.¹⁰¹

In verse 2, the writer begins to point out the real issue that the people have not yet begun to build the house of the Lord. Meanwhile, they were busy building their own houses. Verse 2 forms a separate sentence with embedded clauses and a

⁹⁹ Herbert Wolf, *Haggai and Malachi* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1976), 13.

¹⁰⁰ Exodus 3:14-15; 6:2-3; 33:19; 34:6-7.

¹⁰¹ Mark J. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, IL: Zondervan, 2004), 88.

marked antithesis in the parallel clauses: (a) thus said the Lord; (b) these people say; (c) the time is not ripe to rebuild the temple.¹⁰²

The phrase, “this people say,” rather than “my people,” as in Isaiah 8:6 and often elsewhere, implies a rejection by the Lord.¹⁰³ The reason for Yahweh’s displeasure is that the people say—this also indeed means “have said” and “are still saying”—“The time has not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.” The temple had laid waste for nearly sixty-seven years, and nineteen years had passed since Cyrus had released the Jews from captivity.¹⁰⁴ This is a quite long period of time to abandon the temple of God.

It is unknown exactly how many private homes were elaborately decorated. Zerubbabel and Joshua may have been living in mansions. Most of the people seemed to be suffering in dire poverty. Ralph L. Smith says, “There are signs of economic hardship during Darius’s early years as emperor because of economic “reforms” (i.e., taxation resulting in inflation). Any financial resources of those who returned from exile in the waves of people accompanying Zerubbabel and Joshua would have been rendered worthless in the early years of Darius.”¹⁰⁵ Moreover, they suffered from drought, crop failures, food shortages, and inflation. The people might have used their hardships as an excuse to not rebuild the temple.

¹⁰² Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 20.

¹⁰³ Isaiah 6:9, 10; cf. Hosea 1:9.

¹⁰⁴ Hinckley G. Mitchell, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai and Zechariah* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1999), 44.

¹⁰⁵ Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, WBC (Dallas, TX: Word, 1984), 153.

There were reasons why the Jews had not yet built the temple. For example, the lack of action may lie on theological level, with the people waiting for the appearance of a messianic figure in order to begin the project for the completion of the seventy years prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 29:10).¹⁰⁶ Or, Boda asserts that perhaps the reason was a lack of commitment to the rebuilding project because of their Persian overlords (see the political intrigue in Ezra 1–6) or perhaps they were waiting for improved economic conditions.¹⁰⁷ Whatever their reasons, the people were neglecting one of the most important tasks in which they had been commissioned by God and Cyrus. Ironically, they were more concerned with building their own houses. Therefore, God asked them with mild sarcasm, “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?”¹⁰⁸ They all had roofs over their heads, while God had no habitation.

The writer uses three rhetorical techniques that place great emphasis on his message. These may be seen in such features as (1) he played on the quotation of the people he has just cited to the leaders of the community: “Is it a time ...?”; (2) rather than delivering a direct attack, a rhetorical question forces the people to think through the issue at hand; and (3) the building up of redundant terms (“you yourselves”) accentuates the contrast between their treatment of themselves and

¹⁰⁶ R. G. Hammerton-Kelly, based on Ezek. 37:24–28; 40–43, concludes: “Rebuilding was a betrayal of the eschatological hope” (“The Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic,” *VT* 20 [1970]: 12).

¹⁰⁷ Mark J. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 88.

¹⁰⁸ Hagai 1:4.

their treatment of God, and the selfishness of the people is stressed by the repeated pronoun.¹⁰⁹ These techniques support the power of the message.

Some sixteen years prior, the foundation of the temple was laid by the people, but then the temple work halted. At present, their attention shifted to build their own houses by paneling them. There was no mention about the specific materials they used to panel their houses. Herbert suggests that the term “paneling” can be interpreted as “ceiling,” because the literal meaning of the word is only “covering.”¹¹⁰ However, if this term is understood in view of the poverty owing to drought and famine described in verses 6–11, this may be better interpreted as an act of covering their houses with luxurious materials, such as cedar.

Whatever material was used, the contrast is obvious: the people had a roof over their heads, while the temple had none. It was unreasonable to expect anyone to live in a roofless house, but God’s question, “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?” made its point. What worth did they set on their God when they left his temple in ruins?

God Sums Up the Plight of the People (5–6)

Until this point, Haggai’s message used indirect rhetorical techniques. He asked a question (4) and called for deep contemplation (5–7).¹¹¹ The term, “Lord Almighty,” is mentioned a second time to affirm the authority the prophet had when

¹⁰⁹Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 88.

¹¹⁰ Wolf, *Haggai*, 16.

¹¹¹ Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 90.

he delivered the message to the people. It seems that verses 5 and 6 are inseparable. In verse 5, the Hebrew figure of speech, “give careful thought to your ways,” literary means “set your heart upon your ways.”¹¹² The NASB translates this as “consider your ways.” Haggai seemed to urge the people to consider their motives for neglecting the task to rebuild the temple.

The demand for attention was publicly proclaimed in order that the people might understand the connection between their negligence of God’s house and their total lack of success in everyday life.¹¹³ This is a classic example of “the law of cause and effect.” To make his point, Haggai gave five examples of their negligence in the rebuilding of God’s house that affected the life of the people: (1) the people planted abundantly, but yielded little return; (2) they ate, but they were never full; (3) they drank, but they never had their fill; (4) their clothing was inadequate to keep them warm; and (5) whatever profits did come their way were lost through the holes in their purses. The lack of crops in 1:10–11 and 2:15–17 implied the crops had been poor for years.

God Gives Reasons for Their Distress (7–11)

In this unit, the phrase, “the Lord Almighty,” is stated for the third time, while the phrase, “give careful thought to your ways,” is repeated twice. This reminds the people that God was seriously demanding them to consider their thoughts and to respond positively to his words. With the purpose of bringing about change, God

¹¹² Wolf, *Haggai*, 17.

¹¹³ Haggai 1:6.

made this more forceful and direct. The subtle techniques used in verses 2 through 4 have now changed. The prophet called for three actions: “go up,” “bring down,” and “build.”¹¹⁴ These imperatives command the rebuilding of the temple, but the ultimate desired outcome is the pleasure and honor of God.

In the history of Israel, the tabernacle and the temple were the places where God “dwells” among his people.¹¹⁵ In Hebrew, this is expressed by two verbs, “*yasab*”, “to sit,” or “to dwell,” and “*Sakan*”, “to settle,” or “to live in.” This means that the temple was a symbol of a place where God chose to meet His people and to maintain his covenant relationship with them. It does not mean, however, that this place must be interpreted as a permanent or static dwelling, but rather as an aspect of his self-disclosure, his communion with his people.¹¹⁶ Ralph L. Smith states that this statement can be interpreted in two ways. The first is “I will allow myself to be glorified or honored.” The second, “I will be glorified.” The latter refers to the coming of the messianic age.¹¹⁷

By obeying His command, the people declared to the world that their God was worthy to have a dwelling place where he could be worshiped. To glorify God is to honor Him, as the meaning of this Hebrew word suggests.

At the center of the prophetic message is the call for the people to take action. This is followed by two responses given by Yahweh.¹¹⁸ Together, these

¹¹⁴ Haggai 1:8.

¹¹⁵ Exodus 25:8.

¹¹⁶ See Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai*, 33.

¹¹⁷ Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 153.

¹¹⁸ Haggai 1:8.

create a dialogue between God and the people of Israel. Now, although this dialogue does not present the people speaking for themselves, God's speeches anticipate and voice the people's thoughts and hearts. This is seen in verses 2–7 when God says, "These people say ..." ¹¹⁹ and in verses 9–11 when the Lord declares: "Why?" ¹²⁰ In both dialogues, there is a connection between two basic issues: the house of the Lord and the poverty of the people. At first, the connection is made subtly through the use of the interrogative, "Is it time for you yourselves," and the reflective verb, "Give careful thought to your ways." But, moving into verses 9–11, the connection is made directly and abrasively: "Why? ... because...." God makes this clear in verse 11.

At the center of the prophetic message is the call for the people to take action, "Go up into the mountains and cut timber, and build the house." ¹²¹ Mitchell argues that it is not clear to what mountains he refers. It is possible that the prophet had in mind Lebanon, whence the timber for the first temple was procured. ¹²² However, it is doubtful if, under the given circumstances, Haggai would have directed his people to seek materials for the new structure at so great a distance. It would have involved too much time and expense and attracted too much attention. ¹²³ No mention is made of bringing stone, probably because this was

¹¹⁹ Haggai 1:2

¹²⁰ Haggai 1:9.

¹²¹ Haggai 1:8.

¹²² Cf. 1 Kings 5:15ff.

¹²³ Mitchell, *Haggai and Malachi*, 46.

available locally. There is no specific mention of repentance, but obedience in action would demonstrate they had turned their backs on apathy and indifference.¹²⁴

The people hoped that the harvest would be plentiful, but in reality it was not. They got very little, and even the little that they were able to bring home evaporated before the Lord. God “blows into it,” and everything disappeared. All of these happened because God’s house lied in ruins, while their individual homes were cared for. This is an emphatic restatement of verse 4.

If, in verse 6, God demanded his people to reflect on why their lives did not prosper, in verses 9 through 11, God directly stated that he was the one who brought into a reality all the difficulties Israel experienced, saying, “I blew it away.”¹²⁵ This was the reason why the heavens withheld the dew and the earth withheld its produce.¹²⁶ (v 10). God was the one who called for “a drought on the land and the hills,...and on all their labors.”¹²⁷ At this point, God reemphasized what he had declared in verse 6 that there was a close connection between their behavior and their circumstances; between obedience to God and his blessings; between their spiritual condition and their material gains. In other words, God maintained that there was a direct connection between their poverty and their neglect of the temple.¹²⁸ If the people of God obeyed him wholeheartedly, God would bless their lives, both spiritually and materially. On the other hand, if they neglected his

¹²⁴ Baldwin, *Haggai*, 43.

¹²⁵ Haggai 1:9.

¹²⁶ Haggai 1:10.

¹²⁷ Haggai 1:11.

¹²⁸ cf. Hosea 2:8, where gold and silver as well as crops are as the direct gift of God.

statutes and disobeyed him by living in unrighteous, God's blessing would be far away from them. This principle remains relevant throughout the Old Testament, as shown in Malachi 3:8-11.

God revealed his power over the natural world by ordering the heavens to withhold the dew, the earth to withhold its produce, and by calling a drought on the land so that the people of God lived in misery. Dew was important, especially in August and September when the weather was extremely hot, to prevent ripening grain from wilting in the heat. The result of a drought was devastating for the people of Israel. They lost everything from grain to wine, and from food for themselves to food for their livestock. This is ironic, as Joice cynically states, "The heavens and the earth obeyed their Creator's word, but his people did not (cf. Isa 1:2, 3; Jer 18:14–17)."¹²⁹

The Big Idea of the Text

"God encouraged his people to prioritize the building of the temple, not their own houses, so that they would live in his blessing."

The Big Idea of the Sermon

"Those who prioritize God more than their own concerns will live in God's blessing."

¹²⁹ Baldwin, *Haggai*, 43.

Conclusion

As is the case with all biblical preaching, preaching Old Testament narrative texts using a narrative approach requires the preacher to find the main message of a text that will be preached. This is a basic problem for most Indonesian preachers. The presentation of the exegesis of the three Old Testament passages above expects to help participants learn how to conduct an accurate exegesis of a narrative text to determine the central big idea of a text.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a literature review for the thesis. It will discuss the role of the biblical genres, particularly Old Testament narrative. The unique characteristics of Old Testament narrative requires a preacher to interpret a narrative passage in a way in order that he may find the author's intended meaning of that narrative. So, a preacher needs to understand the characteristics of Old Testament narrative and how to properly analyze a narrative passage in light of these characteristics.

The Importance of Genre in Interpreting Scripture

The Bible is a unique piece of literature compared to other well-known pieces of world literature. Perhaps, one of its unique attributes is its diverse use literary genres.¹ The Bible uses narrative, poetry, proverb, epistle, parable, allegory, miracle story, prophecy, and more – sometimes in a single book – to communicate God's truth. The Bible is a collection of writings consisting of different genres. When choosing a certain genre to be used in communicating his message to his readers, a biblical author did so carefully and artistically. He did this, knowing that through the chosen genre, the message would be communicated to his readers with the

¹ Roy B. Zuck *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communication Ministries, 1991), 126. Zuck explains that genre is derived from a French word, which originated from a Latin word *genus*, which means a type of literature.

expectation that the rhetorical impact would persuasively influence them.² With this in mind, the genre of a biblical text is not merely a matter of packaging, but also a matter of content and substance. If a preacher only focuses on "the wrapper" and not on "the content", or vice versa, he may never grasp the author's intended meaning. As a result, he may misinterpret the biblical passage preached.

Kevin Vanhoozer emphasizes the importance of recognizing the genre of the text, believing that a genre can provide an interpreter a literary context of the text, and this context will help him discover the author's intended meaning.³ In the same vein, Grant Osborne insists, "Genre plays a positive role as a hermeneutical device for determining the *sensus literalis* or the intended meaning of the text. Genre is more than a means of classifying literary types; it is an epistemological tool for unlocking the meaning of individual text."⁴ Therefore, it is necessary for a preacher to pay attention to the literary form of a biblical passage while preparing his sermon so that he will be able to correctly interpret it.

Every genre has its distinctive rules of writing. According to Osborne, "The genre or type of literature in which a passage is found provides the 'rules of the language game' (Wittgenstein), that is, the hermeneutical principles by which one understands it."⁵ For example, when interpreting the Letter to the Romans, one

² Thomas G. Long suggests, "The rhetorical dynamics are the effects that the literary features are intended to produce in a reader. Literary features are in the text; rhetorical dynamics, though caused by the text, are in the reader." Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1989), 26.

³ Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Semantics of Biblical Literature*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 80.

⁴ Grant R. Osborne, "Genre Criticism: Sensus Literalis," *Trinity Journal* 4/2 (1983): 24.

⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991), 8.

should understand its genre of it. This is an epistle that has a genre full of theological arguments and yet it is different to the poetical genre of the book of Psalms with its intension to express human feelings before God. Further, interpreting the book of Proverbs is not the same as interpreting the epistle to the Corinthians. The previous is a collection of sayings and the latter is a pastoral letter. As far as this project is concerned, the same principle also applies to the Old Testament narrative. The narrative cannot be interpreted the same way as other biblical genres. Therefore, before delivering a message from an Old Testament narrative text, a preacher should firstly recognize and understand what the characteristics of the Old Testament narrative as well as how to properly analyze them in order to find out the author's intended meaning.

Old Testament Narrative: The Characteristics and the Principles of Interpretation

The world is full of stories, such as epics, fictions, and biographies, to name a few. Biblical stories are among these. Narrative is a literary form frequently found in the Bible. Over forty percent of the Old Testament, and nearly 60 percent of the New Testament, consists of narrative.⁶ Old Testament narratives are unique because, although they share characteristics common to non-biblical stories, they differ in their main purpose. While the latter may be concerned with informing readers about important historical events, the former is concerned with teaching readers about God and his will for his people. Supporting this theological emphasis,

⁶ Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 151.

Robert Alter writes, “The biblical authors are of course constantly, urgently conscious of telling a story in order to reveal the imperative truth of God’s works in history and of Israel’s hopes and failings.”⁷

Now, the theological emphasis in Old Testament narratives does not mean the biblical authors ignored historical facts. However, their main concern was not presenting historical data, but rather proposing theological truth. The reading of these narratives becomes a matter of exposing the theology behind the story lines. The biblical authors wrote what could communicate key theological themes as they wanted to say. They wrote narratives with a specific purpose in mind. To accomplish this purpose, they chose words, developed sentences, and organized those sentences into specific narrative forms such as plot, character tension, point of view, dialogue, narrative time and setting. Therefore, it is necessary for a preacher to study these characteristics of Old Testament narrative in order to properly understand how narratives are put together and how they work so that he might grasp the author’s intent for each narrative.

Characteristics of Old Testament Narrative

Old Testament narrative is written in different levels of length and complexities. This implies that one cannot read or study them with a one-size-fits-all approach. However, they do have common features basic to any story. These include plot, scenes, point of view, characterization, dialogue, structure, narrative time and setting. During the rhetorical analysis of a text, the preacher as interpreter

⁷ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, NY: Basic, 1981), 46.

should be aware of these elements in order to examine how the biblical author has used them. This section discusses these elements in more detail.

Setting

Setting is an important element of a story. Jeffrey D. Arthurs says, “The final element that makes a story a story is ‘setting—the time and place where the characters act.’”⁸ Setting provides a basic context for the development of plots and characters within a narrative. David Rhoads and Donald Michie convey that the setting serves many functions such as “generating atmosphere, determining conflict, revealing traits in the characters who must deal with problems or threat caused by the settings, offering commentary (sometimes ironic) on the action, and evoking associations and nuances of meaning present in the culture of the readers.”⁹ In this context, setting refers to the histories, circumstances, and locations where events occurred. For example, in the account of David’s fight against Goliath, the setting of the story is a conflict between Israel and Philistia. The fight itself took place at Socoh, in Judah. The Philistines encamped between Socoh and Azekah in Ephesdammin, while Israel encamped beside a stream in Elah valley. Following the fight, the Israelites chased the Philistines along the way to Shaaraim, all the way to Gath and the gates of Ekron. These geographical settings help an interpreter to follow the development of the story in a more vivid way.¹⁰

⁸ Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching the Old Testament*, edited by Scott M. Gibson, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 82.

⁹ Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 160.

¹⁰ 1 Samuel 17.

The historical setting also provides a helpful interpretive tool. First, the historical setting behind the text, such as the dating of the prophet of Isaiah or Amos, tells in what historical period the prophet was. Knowing this, one can identify the set of problems that Isaiah or Amos encountered and addressed. As a consequence, the text may be better understood.

Second, the historical setting behind the writing of the text, for example, a prophetic book, also contributes to the understanding of the passage.

Understanding the historical background of the passage may shed light on what motivated a prophet to write his prophecies. More specifically, this will help the interpreter to know what was the condition of the spiritual life of God's people during the prophet's time.

However, in a biblical narrative, sometimes the setting is not clearly presented. As a result, a modern reader must closely read it. For example, 2 Samuel 11:1 states that "In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem." In the last sentence, the author gives a small, but significant, clue about a major problem that would happen to David in the midst of his successful life. While Joab and the king's men were out battling the enemy, David was careless. At that very moment, temptation fell upon him, causing him to sin against God in his adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife.

Plot

Plot is the most important part of a narrative. Without plot, there is no story because it connects and organizes events and scenes into a story. Sidney Greidanus explains that plot gives the story meaning while at the same time it makes the readers interested.¹¹ Plot is not a collection of separate events, as seen in a mosaic, nor is it a sequence of chronological events without any close relationship one to another. It is, indeed, a group of events woven together with cause-and-effect, or logical, connections.

For instance, if a king died in a story, and then the queen died, it can be said that these two events are chronological, but they are not necessary consequential or logical in connection. The consequential connection only occurs when the story shares that the queen died because of the great loss associated with the king's death. If this is the case, the first event caused the second, producing "a plot" because there is a cause-and-effect connection between these two events.

A plot in a narrative is also related to the flow of story. Such a flow can be divided into three parts: the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story. At the beginning of a story, the background or exposition supplies the details needed for understanding the story. It introduces the characters and gives their names, traits, physical appearances, positions in life, and the relationships among them.¹² It may also describe the geographical or historical setting. At the beginning of a story, the

¹¹ Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 203-05.

¹² Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2004), 111.

starting point of the development of action occurs as Bar-Efrat states, “In general no information is included in the exposition which does not have a definite function in the development of action.”¹³

Next, the flow of a story moves to the middle part. This usually begins with a problem caused by antagonistic figure(s). It is followed by the appearance of protagonist figure(s) in a scene who heroically tries to resolve the problem. At this point, the conflict between the two begins. Tremper Longman pinpoints that here, “the plot is thrust forward by conflict.”¹⁴ The conflict intensely moves to the climax as Bar-Efrat recognizes.¹⁵ From such a climax, the plot then descends rapidly to the resolution of the tension.¹⁶

Finally, the plot of the story moves to the last part of the story where it will come to an end. Generally, the story ends in a conclusion or denouement. Some scholars lump this together with the resolution.¹⁷ Steven Mathewson notes, “some stories’ conclusions develop the consequences of this resolution for the principal characters.”¹⁸ Furthermore, a narrative normally strives to end its flow in a vivid

¹³ Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 114.

¹⁴ Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 93.

¹⁵ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 121. Also, see Longman, *Literary Approaches*, 92.

¹⁶ Steven Mathewson, “Guidelines for Understanding and Proclaiming Old Testament Narratives,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:166 (October 1997): 416.

¹⁷ Mathewson, “Guidelines,” 416.

¹⁸ Mathewson, “Guidelines,” 416.

way. Bar-Efrat believes that the conclusion in many biblical narratives is clearly marked, often by someone who returns home or leaves for another destination.¹⁹

A plot flows horizontally throughout the story. However, the narrator vertically inserts his own vision and message into the scenes.²⁰ Fokkeman says, “every word that the writer allows to participate has a relation to his vision and themes. At the same time, his task was to allot each detail its correct position along the linear axis.”²¹ In the same vein, Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage provide a sample on this issue. In 1 Samuel 17,

Each of the plot elements reveals important information about the true meaning of the story. This is more than a story about a young man who kills a giant. It is an expose that reveals Saul’s lack of faith in God and the spiritual impotence of Israel. It reminds us that people, perhaps even those in our own family, are prepared to stand in the way of our own journey of faith. It is a testimony to the power of God, which is greater than the perceived strength of any enemy. It is a story about David and his victory over evil, which anticipates a greater Son of David and His ultimate victory over evil when He crushed a head, the head of Satan (Rom 16:20). You might miss some of these principles if you fail to discover the plot, or to consider the story in the full canonical context of Scripture.²²

Scene

A narrative has a plot divided into scenes that are closely inter-connected. Every scene has a special function that describes an event that happened at a certain

¹⁹ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 130-31. Also, see Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 65.

²⁰ J. P. Fokkeman, *Reading Biblical Narrative* (Louisville, KY: WJKP, 1999), 78.

²¹ Fokkeman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 76.

²² Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis and Stephen Rummage, *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 2011), Loc 1783, Kindle.

place and time.²³ Adele Berlin compares scenes to the frames of a film,²⁴ while Kaiser equates them to paragraphs in a prose passage of the Bible.²⁵ This means that, although it can stand on its own because of having its focus and message, a scene only becomes a complete story when it is related to other scenes. Therefore, it is necessary for an interpreter to discover scenes by observing changes that occur in place and time within the story. These changes in a narrative may be seen in some changes of the scenes.

However, Pratt suggested that one should not only concentrate on words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, but they should also pay attention to the significant change of time, setting and mood of the narrative.²⁶ The *change of time* sometimes is seen when the writer of Old Testament narrative texts marked the changes of scenes by giving an adverb of time such as “tomorrow,” “morning,” “evening,” “month,” “year,” or “after that.”²⁷

Yet, this does not mean that the author always presents these events exactly chronologically. There is another change of time that describes the movement of scene from the event that is happening to the scene that has happened before (antecedent action). This flashback is often seen in the use of Hebrew grammar. Pratt provides an example from the siege of Jerusalem by Shisak, king of Egypt.

²³ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 64.

²⁴ Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield, UK: Almond, 1983), 125, quoted in Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 199.

²⁵ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 66.

²⁶ Richard Pratt, *He Gave Us a Story* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1993), 152-153.

²⁷ Pratt, *He Gave Us a Story*, 152-153.

Having mentioned that Shishak and his army had surrounded Jerusalem,²⁸ the author gives a flashback of a Shishak's previous victory over the fortified cities of Judah.²⁹ The movement of scene toward such a flashback often indicates the beginning of a new scene.³⁰ By noting these changes, one should be able to identify a number of scenes in an Old Testament narrative so that he will easily discover what the author intended to say.

Meanwhile, the *change of setting*, or sometimes called the "delimiting of setting," is shown by the change of its setting, such as the change of place and environment.³¹ This kind of change can be seen in Nehemiah's story. He heard news about the Jewish remnants that survived the exile and the city of Jerusalem from Hanani when he was in the citadel of Susan.³² Then, the scene moves to another place, the Trans-Euphrates, where he came to the governors of this place along with king's army officers and cavalry to give the king's letter to them.³³ Finally, in the next scene, Nehemiah has arrived in Jerusalem to build its wall.³⁴ The changes in location denote the change in setting.

The *change of mood* is another important alteration. According to Pratt, "scenes also divide as the mode of narration changes. Narrative mode is determined

²⁸ 2 Chronicles 12:2.

²⁹ 2 Chronicles 12:3-4.

³⁰ Pratt, *He Gave Us a Story*, 154.

³¹ Pratt, *He Gave Us a Story*, 154.

³² Nehemiah 1:1.

³³ Nehemiah 2:9.

³⁴ Nehemiah 2:11.

by the degree to which the writer's presence is felt, whether he has walked out to center stage or remained backstage, allowing the characters themselves to tell the story through their own thoughts, words, and actions."³⁵ The movement from one mood to another indicates an important clue to the partition of the scenes. Thus, one can divide the story into its basic units. By doing this, he will be able to understand and to discover the main message within a story.

In observing a scene, Greidanus prompted that the number of characters in every scene is usually not more than two, namely, two individuals, or an individual and a group. He adds,

Frequently God is one of the two "characters" in a scene.... Even in scenes where God, in a particular frame, is not one of the "characters" or is not represented by one of the characters, the scene as a whole will undoubtedly reveal the presence of God, for the human characters act out the scene against the backdrop of God's promises, God's enabling power, God's demands, God's providence.³⁶

Characterization

Most characters in a biblical narrative are people, although God, Satan, angels, demons, animals who have roles in the story may be included. They make the story move through their actions and their dialogue. Therefore, Dillard and Longman say, "characters form the gist of a plot."³⁷ Like Western prose, characters of Hebrew narrative can be identified as

³⁵ Pratt, *He Gave Us a Story*, 155.

³⁶ Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 199.

³⁷ Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 34.

protagonists (central characters), antagonists (forces arrayed against the central characters), and foils (characters who heighten the central character by providing a contrast or occasionally a parallel).³⁸

On the one hand, the protagonist is the central character in a story, whether sympathetic or unsympathetic.³⁹ Through such a person, the readers may enter the journey within a story and identify themselves with that character.⁴⁰ They may feel the emotions within a story such as sadness, happiness, hope, anxiety, and even fear. Readers may identify such a character as good or evil, hero or miscreant.⁴¹

On the other hand, the antagonist is a character who actively creates problems. Often, he opposes the protagonist, or fails the protagonist in some way. Antagonists may be evil or good; they may intend harm or benefit to the protagonist.⁴² It is necessary to note the numbers of the protagonists and the antagonists are not limited. They can be one, two, three or a group of people. Still, the encounter or tension between the two always creates a conflict. Aside from the protagonist and antagonist, a foil character or supporting character within a story is

³⁸ Mathewson, "Guidelines," 418.

³⁹ Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 72.

⁴⁰ The meaning of identification here is a process where the readers identify themselves with the protagonist so that they will be involved with this character emotionally throughout the story. When the character is sad, the readers will also feel sad and vice versa. Whenever such a character is able to gain sympathy from the readers, the process of identification begins. At this point, identification is a product of sympathy.

⁴¹ Pratt, *He Gave Us a Story*, 143.

⁴² Pratt, *He Gave Us a Story*, 144.

a character that sets off or heightens another character, usually by being a contrast, but occasionally by being a parallel.⁴³

In Hebrew narrative, as Berlin explains,

Characters are not described in terms of their physical appearance or emotional situation, but rather merely given attributes like “rich,” “old,” “weak,” or “strong.” The main purpose of describing these adjectives is “not to enable the reader to visualize the character, but to enable him to situate the character in terms of his place in society, his own particular situation, and his outstanding traits—in other words, to tell what kind of person he is.”⁴⁴

In spite of this, the Old Testament writers never intended to comprehensively explain their main characters. They selectively chose what they wanted to say and omitted what they did not want to say about the characters. They frequently focused on motives, attitudes, and morals of the characters by describing external factors such as the performances, social statuses, actions and words of the characters in the story.

In Hebrew narrative, characterization is often introduced by contrasting one character against the other, such as Abraham and Lot, Jacob and Esau, Samuel and the sons of Eli, David and Saul, and Ruth and Orpah. In this way, some of these characters act as foils. Greidanus reminds his readers, “Characters are contrasted not only side by side in relatively small literary units but also, at some distance, in the large literary units and in varying degrees of complexity. For example, Rahab and Achan are contrasted, as are Samuel and the sons of Eli.”⁴⁵ Generally, however,

⁴³ Ryken, *Words of Delight*, 72.

⁴⁴ Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 36.

⁴⁵ Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 200.

characterization can also be divided into the two categories of sympathetic characters and unsympathetic characters. During the course of a story, a character may remain the same, while others may change. The first is called a static character, while the others are developing characters.⁴⁶

An important thing to note here is that because the main purpose of Old Testament writers was to reveal God and his will for his people, the central character of every narrative in Old Testament is always God. For example, God and Adam (Gen 3), God and Cain (Gen 4), God and Noah (Gen 6), to mention a few.⁴⁷ Although he does not always explicitly appear in a narrative, God is never absent from the view of the authors. The authors had a set of presuppositions that God is the controller of events throughout history. As a consequence, human characters described in the Bible are only participants in God's redemptive plan for humanity. Thus, God is the central figure in every Old Testament narrative, even when he works silently behind the screen.⁴⁸

Therefore, the above discussion emphasizes the importance of finding God and his role in the narrative. The main intent of an Old Testament narrative is to magnify God and not human heroes. Kaiser proposes that:

All efforts to concentrate on the human character in a story while failing to locate God's actions in the narrative are wrong. It leads to divorcing the character from God's larger redemptive plan, bypassing the point that the author was making... The expositor must not be distracted by temptations to be reductionistic or to develop one's own sets of moralisms, good as they may be or as frequently as they may be taught somewhere else in the Bible.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ryken, *Words of Delight*, 72.

⁴⁷ Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 199.

⁴⁸ Pratt, *He Gave Us a Story*, 131.

⁴⁹ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 70.

Moreover, understanding the characters and their roles within the story will help the reader to be aware of the important aspects and basic drama of their accounts. One can also gain an understanding of how the writers wanted their readers to respond to their writings. Most of all, through the identification of the characterizations within the story, the meaning of the story may be discovered.

Dialogue

Dialogue in Hebrew narrative is not only intended to fill in a good portion of a narrative, but it is also a means to carry a large part of the freight of meaning. A dialogue can also designate the emphasized dynamic of the story. Through it, readers can recognize the conflict that occurs, the tension that increasingly heightens, and also the nature of each character. All of these create new meaning to the readers. Alter seems to agree with this when he says, "Everything in the world of biblical narrative ultimately gravitates towards dialogue."⁵⁰ In Hebrew narrative, dialogue is usually done by two characters or groups, often in conflict with one another, because they show differences in ideas or concepts.⁵¹

To interpret a narrative, one needs to pay attention to a moment "when indirect discourse (conversation reported indirectly) turns to direct discourse

⁵⁰ Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 182.

⁵¹ Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 72.

(conversation denoted by quotation marks), this is a clue that careful attention should be paid to what is being said.”⁵²

Moreover, Alter asserts that an interpreter has to notice the place where the dialogue is first introduced, for that place is often the important moment in revealing the character of the speaker— perhaps even more important than the substance of what is said. He adds that direct speech set in formal verse often has a summarizing or ceremonial function, such as Hannah’s speech in 1 Samuel 2:1–10 and Adam’s outburst in Genesis 2:23.⁵³ In the same vein, Kaiser says,

It is especially important to pay attention to those times when one character repeats a part or the whole of what another has just said. Often in these repetitions, there is a small deviation, slight alteration, reversal of order, elaboration, deletion, or another difference. Such may tip off the interpreter to something that may be a key to disclosing the character or event being described. Some examples of this variation in dialogue may help. The oldest example is the one where God’s instructions to Adam concerning the trees of the garden (Gen 2: 15- 17) are repeated with slight differences by the serpent and the woman, thereby giving their own twist to the commands of God (Gen 3:1-2).⁵⁴

Hence, it is important for a reader of an Old Testament narrative to carefully follow the dialogue in order to catch the development of the points being made—often indirectly—by the author.

⁵² Stein, *Interpreting the Bible*, 165.

⁵³ Stein, *Interpreting the Bible*, 28.

⁵⁴ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 72.

Point of View

Kaiser states that point of view is “the perspective from which the story is told.”⁵⁵ This perspective is created by the author who, through his or her perspective, will control the reader’s perception by setting the mood of the story and by pointing the narrative lens in a specific direction, thereby giving the readers a certain angle of vision. In other words, the narrator plays a crucial role in shaping the response of the reader to the story he or she is reading. The narrator achieves this response in a variety of ways, from presenting and withholding information from the reader to offering explicit commentary. However, Kaiser comments, “Occasionally, the narrator yields that privileged position and allows one of the characters in the narrative to make the point that is desired in the story.”⁵⁶

Point of view may be compared to the working of a camera in a movie. Technically, a camera provides the perspective of everything that appears in the picture. The camera does not only guide the watchers’ insight, but it also limits their view as well. Berlin says, “The narrator is the camera eye; we ‘see’ the story through what he presents.”⁵⁷ Thomas G. Long provides an example:

When the author of 2 Samuel writes, “It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking upon the roof of the king’s house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful,” the camera follows David, looks over his shoulder so that we see what he sees, whom he sees. We are guided toward and experience the event with David.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching stament*, 67.

⁵⁶ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 67.

⁵⁷ Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 44.

⁵⁸ Long, *Literary Forms of the Bible*, 79.

Now usually, the point of view given by a narrator can be divided into first and third person narrative. In the former, the narrator is usually a character in the story and, as a result, presents a limited point of view.⁵⁹ However, these narratives are rarely found in the Bible. The common form found in the Bible is the third person narrative. In this mode of narrating, the narrator is omniscient and omnipresent because it seems that he knows everything about the story, and often he knows more than some other characters in it. Berlin suggests:

In the case of biblical narrative, the narrator has a potentially omniscient perceptual point of view. He can be anywhere and everywhere, even inside the minds of the characters... Thus, although the narrator potentially knows more than the reader, for practical purposes the perceptual viewpoints of the narrator and the reader coincide—the reader comes to see what the narrator sees.⁶⁰

Scholars have different views on the explanation and classification of points of view. Osborne denotes that scholars have identified five areas where point of view operates, namely psychological, evaluative or ideological, spatial perspective of biblical narrator, temporal perspective, and phraseological point of view.⁶¹ However, Kaiser insists that the most important point of view is the viewpoint of the original writer, who stood in the council of God and received the original revelation, and has expressed it in the text of this passage.⁶²

Literally speaking, the point of view is simple and easy to find in the narrative. Every writer or narrator has a certain message to be delivered to his

⁵⁹ See Nehemiah and Isaiah 6:1-13 for examples.

⁶⁰ Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 52.

⁶¹ Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 156-157.

⁶² Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 68.

audience through the point of view. Point of view will guide the readers to perceive the focus of a story in order to discover the message within it. Kaiser pinpoints, "Once we have identified that verse or portion of a verse in the narrative that supplies the point of view for the entire group of scenes, we are able to declare what the subject of this passage is and the title we will be able to give to our message."⁶³

Structure

Shimeon Bar-Efrat defines structure as a "network of relations among the parts of an object or a unit."⁶⁴ Like modern writers, writers of Hebrew narratives write their stories using structure. One story is related to another story in sequence and in message. Greidanus points out that they wrote by using "structural patterns to mark their text in not only structured their material to enhance the impact of its message, but often intentionally utilized specific and sophisticated structural features in the organization of their texts to reinforce the impact and the implications of their messages and to make them as memorable as possible.

Therefore, to find the theme of a story, an interpreter must not overlook the structure of the story and its context. Kaiser asserts, "It is important to notice how each individual pericope within the larger structure contributes and expands the theme of the whole structure as well as the individual structure."⁶⁵ Like any story, the structure of Hebrew narrative is organized towards a climax. Generally, this

⁶³ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 67.

⁶⁴ Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (1980): 165, quoted in Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 73.

⁶⁵ Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 74.

climax shows the focus of the story and may reflect the theme of the story.

However, the reader must understand that sometimes a story has more than one climax, called a complex plot.

In making the structure of a narrative, Old Testament writers usually make use of some literary and rhetorical devices. The purpose of using these devices is to create aesthetical senses and to show the message of the story. The following briefly discusses some common devices used in Hebrew narrative.

Repetition

One of the favorite rhetorical devices in Hebrew narrative is repetition. J. P. Fokkelman explains well the difference in writing style between modern writers and biblical writers. He says that unlike modern writers who usually avoid repetitions, biblical writers intentionally and systematically use repetitions.⁶⁶ Repetition can be in the form of a word, phrase, or sound and it is used in various ways, such as “key words (*leitwort*), motifs, themes, and sequence of action.”⁶⁷ Within a particular text, the repetition of a word, expression, root or even idea can produce strong rhetorical impacts on the reader in order to see the true meaning of the story.

Among the various kinds of repetition, the most commonly used is the repetition of words. In many cases, the author used repeated words or even sentences to express a certain emphasis, meaning, or development of the text. One example occurs in Genesis 22 with the phrase “your son, your only son.”⁶⁸ This

⁶⁶ Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 112.

⁶⁷ Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 95-96.

⁶⁸ Genesis 22:2, 12, 16.

repetition emphasizes the importance of the word “boy,” referred to Isaac, in the story. For another example, the author of 2 Kings 1 uses repetition to emphasize God’s disapproval of the king’s practice of paganism and the authority of God’s prophet over the king. The narrative mentions God’s message to the king three times (v 3, 6, and 16). Each asks the same question: “Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?” Through the repetition one cannot miss the reason for God’s judgment on the king. In 2 Kings 1, it can also be read an encounter between Elijah and a royal military official (vv 9-15) for three times. The first two panels are virtually identical; the repetition makes it clear that the king does not truly respect the Lord’s prophet. The repetition also heightens the reader’s anticipation and sets the stage for the dramatic finale. Significant variation occurs in the third panel and draws our attention to one of the narrative’s main themes—God’s prophets must be shown proper respect.

Inclusion

A second device commonly found in Hebrew narrative is inclusion. Actually, inclusion is a special form of repetition in Biblical narrative. It is “a technique in which the author at the end of a discussion returns to the point he made at the beginning.”⁶⁹ The presence of the inclusion in a narrative text can aid in determining the limits of a literary unit. Inclusion also functions to lead the mind of the readers to certain emphases the author wishes to highlight. Finally, inclusion in narrative, which is audible, serves to remind the hearers about the message of the story as has

⁶⁹ Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 39.

been told at the beginning of the story.⁷⁰ In this way, the appendix to the Book of Judges is marked off, as it is stated, “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.”⁷¹

Chiasmus

Another common device is a chiasmus or chiasm. Chiasmus is a Hebrew literary form that uses a unique repeated pattern for clarification and emphasis. The term “chiasmus” originally derived from a Greek verb *chi* (which looks like an “x”), which means to mark with two lines crossing like a χ [ci]. It involves the crossing or inverting of related material in a parallel construction, whether words, clauses, parallel lines of poetry, or a whole narrative.⁷² In other words, chiasmus always involves a balanced multi-unit inverted parallelism which leads to and then moves away from a distinct central component—which itself can be either in the form of a single unit [as in ABCB’A’] or in the form of two parallel subunits [as in ABCC’B’A’]. A chiasmus organizes themes much like a sandwich:

A) a piece of bread on top
 B) mustard
 C) a delightful piece of meat
 C’) another savory piece of meat
 B’) more mustard
A’) another piece of bread on the bottom.

⁷⁰ Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 209.

⁷¹ Judges 17:6; 21:25.

⁷² John W. Welch, “Introduction,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim, Germany: Gertenberg, 1981), 11, quoted in Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 76-77.

Generally, chiasms focus on the flavorful meat, but the bread and mustard are necessary for a complete sandwich. Some chiasms do not have a mustard layer, other chiasms have lettuce on both sides of the meat, and some have just one piece of delicious meat.

A chiasmus may function as a signal to the readers to see the main focus of the story. In ancient time, biblical authors could not use writing techniques such as bold, *italics*, underline, indentation, bullets, or font size letters to help the reader understand what was important because these were not part of the ancient languages. Instead, they often used the structural arrangement of repeated thoughts or phrases to accomplish this emphasis. Osborne affirms the strategic importance of chiasmus in biblical literature: “[A] technique that highlights major themes [in the Old Testament writings] is chiasm, which reverses words or events in successive parallel clauses or sections.”⁷³

In Genesis 17:1-27, the occurrence of a chiastic structure can be seen as following:

- A. God’s first speech: God is Almighty God, reaffirmation (1b-2)
- B. Abraham falls on his face (3a)
- C. God’s second speech: name-change, nation, kings (4-8)
- D. God’s third speech: the sign of the covenant (9-14)**
- A’. God’s fourth speech: name-change, nation, kings (15-16)
- B’. Abraham falls on his face and he laughed (17-18)
- C’. God’s fifth speech: Sarah will bear, Isaac will receive the covenant; not Ishmael (19-22)

In this pericope the reader can see that the main focus of the story is about the sign of the covenant that appears in verses 9-14.

⁷³ Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 39.

Conclusion

Given the importance of the role of biblical genres to the biblical writers in communicating their messages to their original readers, an Old Testament narrative preacher must pay close attention to the uniqueness of the text's genre in order to grasp the author's intended meaning. Despite the different complexities, Old Testament narratives share a few basic elements: plot, scenes, point of view, characterization, dialogue, structure, narrative timing and setting. Careful observation of these elements will better enable a preacher to obtain the author's intended meaning. This intended meaning is the core of the sermon.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN

This chapter provides a design for a narrative preaching course for homiletics teachers, so that they can understand and teach narrative preaching well. The specific focus is on a narrative approach to preaching Old Testament narratives. The course is taught during a period of four days, with each day consisting of two sessions. The morning session runs from 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM, and the evening session runs from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Each session lasts 120 minutes, with a 10-minute break in the middle of each session and a 5-minute closing.

The course is divided into eight lessons. The first lesson begins with a discussion about the problems of preaching Old Testament narrative texts, with the expectation that participants will see the need to preach Old Testament narratives using a narrative approach. The second lesson outlines the characteristics of Old Testament narrative texts so that participants will be able to identify and articulate the narrative characteristics of an Old Testament narrative text.

The third lesson addresses how to grasp the “Big Idea” of an Old Testament narrative, or what is commonly called the exegetical idea. In this lesson, participants will learn how to perform proper exegesis, and to identify and point out the “Big Idea” of an Old Testament narrative text. In the fourth lesson, participants will learn how to form the “Big Idea” and the goal of a specific narrative sermon; this sermonic “Big Idea” is often called the homiletical idea. The aim of this lesson is to equip participants to demonstrate their understanding of the “Big Idea” of a narrative sermon, and to determine and articulate the goal of a narrative sermon.

The fifth and sixth lessons will cover the composition and development of a narrative sermon. The fifth lesson will focus on composing the plot of a narrative sermon. The aim is to help participants understand elements of a narrative sermon plot and to enable them to arrange a plot. The sixth lesson will focus on developing a sermon plot into a narrative sermon. In this lesson, participants will learn the essential elements of developing a sermon plot into a narrative sermon, and then they will be able to compose and develop a sermon plot into a narrative sermon.

The seventh lesson will involve learning about narrative sermons through the examination of provided examples. By doing so, the participants will understand narrative sermons more deeply and be able to construct a narrative sermon. In the eighth lesson, each participant will be asked to preach her/his narrative sermon in front of the class. As a result, they can practice narrative preaching and get input from other participants. Ideally, this will produce a level of confidence that perpetuates the participants' use of a narrative approach to preaching Old Testament narratives.

Before using this material to teach the course, all participants should familiarize themselves with resource material provided in chapters two and three so that they can teach the course well.

Course Description

This course involves the development and application of the thesis that Old Testament narrative texts can be more effective when preached with a narrative approach.

Course Goals

When participants have completed this course, they should be able to:

- Explain how Old Testament narrative texts are more effective when preached with a narrative approach.
- Prepare and deliver a narrative sermon.

Lesson Plans

SESSION I: "Problems of Preaching of Old Testament Narrative Texts"

Duration: 120 minutes

Goals: In this session:

1. Participants will be able to comfortably express their feelings and thoughts in a conducive learning atmosphere (20 minutes).
2. Participants will have an overview of the course as written in the syllabus (20 minutes).
3. Participants can explain the need for a different approach to preaching Old Testament narratives (35 minutes).
4. Participants will be able to explain the important roles of a biblical text genre in interpreting and preaching (30 minutes).

Detailed Lesson Plan

Goal 1: Participants will be able to comfortably express their feelings and thoughts in a conducive learning atmosphere (20 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will know each other so that they feel comfortable in the class.
- Participants will be able to freely express their feelings and thoughts in the learning process.

Procedures:

- The facilitator begins the class with prayer.
- Opening and Greeting. The facilitator greets each student as they enter the class and introduces himself/herself (name, family, education, teaching experience, email address, and phone number).
- The classroom is arranged to facilitate discussion.
- Participant interviews and introductions. In groups of two, students will interview each other using the Needs Assessment Inventory.
- Using the results of the interview, each student will introduce his/her colleague to the group.

Concepts:

- Interaction and discussion leads to familiarization, creating a conducive learning atmosphere.

Resources:

- Tables, chairs, name tags, Needs Assessment Inventory.

Goal 2: Participants will have an overview of the course as written in the syllabus (20 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will know all lesson materials that will be discussed in this course.
- Participants will know the assignments that are required in this course and the assessment method for each assignment.
- Participants will understand the facilitator's goal/course goal from the beginning of the course.
- Participants will know the abilities they will gain from taking this course.

Procedures:

- The facilitator distributes the syllabus to all participants (2 minutes).
- The facilitator explains the syllabus—the description and goal of the course, the lesson materials, the assignments, and the expected final outcomes of the course (15 minutes).
- The facilitator shows some of the required textbooks (3 minutes).

Concepts:

- A good understanding of the course material—including assignments, assessments and expected outcomes—will motivate participants to learn.

Resources:

- Printed copy of the syllabus and some textbooks.

Goal 3: Participants will see the need for a different approach to preaching Old Testament narratives (35 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the deductive approach to preaching Old Testament narratives.
- Participants will be interested in learning the narrative approach to preaching Old Testament narratives.

Procedures:

- The facilitator begins by preaching an Old Testament narrative text, using the deductive approach, as an example (15 minutes).
- After that, participants will discuss in groups of three or four people the issues that arise when Old Testament narratives are preached by using the deductive approach (15 minutes).
- The facilitator will list the results of the discussion and conclude this section of the session (5 minutes).

Concepts:

- By observing and discussing a sample sermon, participants will better understand, feel, and be able to identify some weaknesses of preaching Old Testament narratives using the deductive approach.

Goal 4: Participants are able to explain the roles of biblical text genres in interpreting and preaching (30 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will understand and be able to explain the roles of biblical text genres in interpreting and preaching, as stated by Thomas G. Long.

Procedures:

- The facilitator, using PowerPoint slides, will lecture about the functions of biblical text genres in interpreting and preaching a biblical text, according to Thomas G. Long (15 minutes).
- The class will discuss Long's opinion that the genre of a biblical text affects interpretation and preaching (15 minutes).

Concepts:

- The lecture and discussion will help students better understand the subject.

Resources:

- Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*, 11-39.
- A laptop and PowerPoint slides.

Closing:

- The facilitator will discuss briefly the topic of the next session, namely understanding characteristics of Old Testament narrative texts (5 minutes).

Assignments:

- All students review their syllabus to know the requirements for the next session.
- Reading assignments for the next session: Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 153-164; Leland Ryker, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*, 53-81.

SESSION II: "Understanding the Characteristics of Old Testament Narrative Texts"

Duration: 120 minutes

Goals: In this session

1. Participants will know some important characteristics of Old Testament narratives (30 minutes).
2. Participants will be able to identify and articulate at least four narrative characteristics contained in an Old Testament narrative text (75 minutes).

Detailed Lesson Plan

Goal 1: Participants will know some important characteristics of Old Testament narratives (30 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants are able to express in their own words their understanding about characteristics of Old Testament narratives.

Procedures:

- Participants will discuss Grant R. Osborne's writing, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 153-164, and Leland Ryken's, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*, 53-81 (20 minutes).
- Participants will be asked to express the meaning of Old Testament narrative characteristics in their own words (10 minutes).

Concepts:

Discussion with an opportunity to express their understanding of the material will help the participants learn more deeply.

Resources:

- Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 153-164.
- Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*, 53-81.

Goal 2: Participants will be able to identify and articulate narrative characteristics contained in an Old Testament narrative text (75 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to identify and articulate characteristics of a narrative text, such as setting, plot, scene, characterization, dialogue, point of view, structure, repetition, inclusion, etc.
- Participants can discover the characteristics of the narrative genre in the story of “Abraham Tested” (Gen 22:1-19) and state the main message of the narrative.

Procedures:

- The facilitator will explain the characteristics of Old Testament narratives (25 minutes).
- Participants will be divided into groups of three or four to discuss and discover the characteristics of narratives that exist in the story of “Abraham Tested” (30 minutes).
- Each group will present the results of their group work (20).

Concepts:

- A combination of teacher-centered and student-centered methods accommodates various learning styles to facilitate better understanding of the core concept.

Resources:

- Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 153-164.

- Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*, 53-81.

Closing:

- The facilitator will briefly explain about the “Big Idea” of an Old Testament narrative text, which will be discussed in the following session.

Assignments:

- Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 33-50.
- Three exegesis examples given by the facilitator (Gen 22: 1-19; Hag 1:1-11; and 1 Ki 19:1-18).

SESSION III: “Grasping the Big Idea of an Old Testament Narrative Text / the Exegetical Idea”

Duration: 120 minutes

Goals: By the end of this session:

1. Participants will learn the steps to conduct proper Old Testament narrative exegesis (40 minutes).
2. The participants will be able to identify and articulate the “Big Idea” of an Old Testament narrative text/the Exegetical Idea (75 minutes).

Detailed Lesson Plan

Goal 1: The participants will learn the steps of conducting proper Old Testament narrative exegesis (40 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will learn the steps of conducting proper Old Testament narrative exegesis.

Procedures:

- The facilitator will ask all participants to identify the steps of narrative exegesis from three exegesis examples given in advance (20 minutes).
- The facilitator will provide an opportunity for all participants to ask questions related to Old Testament narrative exegesis (20 minutes).

Concepts:

- A balance of student-centered methods and teacher-centered tools enables students with various learning styles to grasp key ideas.

Resources:

- Three exegesis examples (Gen 22: 1-19; Hag 1:1-11; and 1 Ki 19:1-1)

Goal 2: The participants will be able to identify and articulate the “Big Idea” of an Old Testament narrative text / the Exegetical Idea (75 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to identify and articulate the “Big Idea” of each of the three exegesis examples given, that is Genesis 22: 1-19; Haggai 1:1-11; and 1 Kings 19:1-18.

Procedures:

- The facilitator will lead a discussion about the main idea of Robinson’s opinion as written in *Biblical Preaching*, pages 33-50 (25 minutes).
- Participants will be given an opportunity, in groups of three or four people, to discover and formulate the “Big Idea” in one of the three exegesis examples (20 minutes).
- Each group will present their “Big Idea,” and others will give their responses (30 minutes).

Concepts:

- Learning in groups will help participants understand the material better and more quickly.

Resources:

- Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 33-50.
- Three exegesis examples (Gen 22: 1-19; Hag 1:1-11; and 1 Ki 19:1-18).

Assignments:

- Compose the sermon “Big Idea” of three exegesis examples.

- Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 33-50 (“The Power of Purpose).

Closing:

- The facilitator will briefly explain the topic of the next session, namely forming the “Big Idea”/ Homiletical Idea and goal of the narrative sermon.

SESSION IV: “Forming the ‘Big Idea’ and Goal of a Narrative Sermon / the Homiletical Idea”

Duration: 120 minutes

Goals: By the end of this session:

1. Participants will be able to demonstrate a good understanding of the “Big Idea” of a narrative sermon (40 minutes).
2. Participants will be able to grasp and articulate the “Big Idea” of a sermon from the three exegesis examples given (Gen 22: 1-19; Hag 1:1-11; and 1 Ki 19:1-18) by using the two elements of an idea: subject and complement (45 minutes).
3. Each participant will be able to determine the sermon goal of his/her narrative sermon (20 minutes).

Detailed Lesson Plan

Goal 1: Participants will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the “Big Idea” of a narrative sermon (40 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to communicate their understanding of the importance of the “Big Idea” for effective communication, according to Haddon W. Robinson.
- Participants will be able to write down key concepts related to the “Big Idea” of a sermon.

Procedures:

- The facilitator will ask some participants to describe their understanding of the “Big Idea” of a sermon, according to Robinson in *Biblical Preaching*, 33-50, and invite all participants to engage in discussion (30 minutes).
- After discussion, the facilitator will ask all participants to write down the key concepts related to the “Big Idea” on one page of paper and submit to the facilitator (10 minutes).

Concepts:

- Participants will gain a greater knowledge by giving them an opportunity to communicate, discuss, and write down their understanding.

Resources:

- Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 33-50.
- Papers and Pens.

Goal 2: Participants will be able to grasp and articulate the “Big Idea” of a narrative sermon (40 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to identify and articulate the sermon “Big Idea” of the three exegesis examples given (Gen 22: 1-19; Hag 1:1-11; and 1 Ki 19:1-18) by using the two elements of a “Big Idea”: the subject and the complement.

Procedures:

- Participants will be given an opportunity in groups of three or four people to discover the sermon “Big Idea” in one of the three exegesis examples (25 minutes).
- At the end of this session, each group will share their sermon “Big Idea” in front of the class (15 minutes).

Resources:

- Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 33-50.
- Three exegesis examples (Gen 22: 1-19; Hag 1:1-11; and 1 Ki 19:1-18).

Concepts:

- By discussing the concepts, working in groups, and articulating the sermon “Big Idea”, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the subject.

Goal 3: Each participant will be able to determine the goal of his/her narrative sermon (25 minutes).

Objectives:

By the end of the class session:

- Participants will know the importance of the sermon goal.
- Participants will be able to formulate his/her narrative sermon goal.

Procedures:

- The facilitator will explain, using PowerPoint slides, the significance of the sermon goal and how to make it (10 minutes).
- The facilitator will give every participant an opportunity to formulate her/his sermon goal on a piece of paper (5 minutes).
- Then each participant will state the purpose of her/his sermon to receive feedback from others (10 minutes).

Concepts:

- A balance of teacher-centered tools (lecture and PowerPoint slides) and student-centered methods (formulating and stating their thoughts) will enable participants to grasp key ideas.

Resources:

- Computer, LCD projector
- Three exegesis examples (Gen 22: 1-19; Hag 1:1-11; and 1 Ki 19:1-1)

- Papers and Pens

Assignments:

- Steven D. Mathew, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*, 122-130.
- Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 117-140.

Closing:

- The facilitator will briefly explain the composition of a narrative sermon plot as the topic that will be discussed in the next session.

SESSION V: "Composing the Plot of a Narrative Sermon"

Duration: 120 minutes

Goals:

1. Participants will understand some elements of a narrative sermon plot (50 minutes).
2. Participants will be able to arrange the plot of a narrative sermon (55 minutes).

Detailed Lesson Plan

Goal 1: Participants will understand elements of a narrative sermon plot (50 minutes).

Objectives:

- The participants will learn the characteristics of elements of a narrative sermon plot.

Procedures:

- The facilitator will use PowerPoint slides to explain the principles of composing a narrative sermon plot and will invite participants to ask questions (20 minutes).
- The class collectively will discuss Jeffrey D. Arthurs's writing in *Preaching with Variety*, 85-101 ("Narrative, Part 2: Everyone Loves a Story") and compare it with Steven D. Mathew's thoughts in *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*, 122-130 ("Outlining the Sermon") (30 minutes).

Concepts:

- A balance of teacher-centered tools (lecture and PowerPoint slides) and student-centered methods enables students with various learning styles to grasp key ideas.

Resources:

- Steven D. Mathew, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*, 117-140.
- Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety*, 117-140.

Goal 2: Participants will be able to arrange the plot of a narrative sermon (55 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to construct a narrative sermon plot using one of three exegesis examples that have been given.
- Participants will be able to evaluate critically the strengths and weaknesses of narrative sermon plots presented by other groups.

Procedures:

- Participants will work in groups of three or four to construct a narrative sermon plot from one of the three exegesis examples given (25 minutes)
- Each group will present their sermon plot in front of the class to be discussed (30 minutes).

Resources:

- Computer, LCD projector
- The three exegesis examples given (Gen 22: 1-19; Hag 1:1-11; and 1 Ki 19:1-18)

Assignments:

- Reading assignments from J. Kent Edwards, *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon*, 90-107.

Closing:

- Facilitator will briefly explain the development of a sermon plot into a narrative sermon, which will be discussed in the next session.

SESSION VI: "Developing a Sermon Plot into a Narrative Sermon"

Duration: 120 minutes

Goals:

1. Participants will understand the essential elements that must be considered when developing a plot into a narrative sermon; ultimately, they will be able to compose a plot that becomes a narrative sermon (105 minutes).

Detailed Lesson Plan

Goal 1: Participants will understand the essential elements that must be considered in developing a plot into a narrative sermon; ultimately, they will be able to compose a plot that becomes a narrative sermon (105 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will learn the essential elements of developing a plot into a narrative sermon.

Procedures:

- Participants will discuss the reading assignments from J. Kent Edwards, *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon*, 90-107 ("Completing the Homiletical Task") and compare to the Eugene L. Lowry's thought in *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* by Eugene L. Lowry, 54-89 (Shape----Strategy) (45 minutes).
- Each participant will be given an opportunity to compose his/her narrative sermon in the library and discuss it with the facilitator (45 minutes).

- All of the participants will return to the class to see their presentation schedule tomorrow (10 minutes).

Concepts:

- Participants will gain a greater level of knowledge by practicing what they know.

Resources:

- J. Kent Edwards, *Effective First–Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon*, 90-107.
- Eugene L. Lowry, *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery*, 54-89.

Assignments:

- Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* 161-175 (Steven D. Mathewson’s narrative sermon “The Greatest Thing You Can Do for Your Kids”).
- Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*, 204-214 (Haddon W. Robinson’s narrative sermon “Our Fathers who are on Earth”).
- Composing a narrative sermon based on a plot that has been made. This sermon will be delivered by each participant in front of the class in sessions VIII.

Closing:

- Facilitator will describe shortly to all participants about two sermons—
Mathewson’ sermon and Robinson’ sermon—that will be discussed in the the
next session.

SESSION VII: “Learning Narrative Sermon from some Examples”

Duration: 120 minutes

Goals:

1. Participants will better understand and be able to critically evaluate the
strengths and weaknesses of a narrative sermon (60 minutes).
2. Participants will be able to construct a narrative sermon (45 minutes).

Detailed Lesson Plan

**Goal 1: Participants will better understand and be able to critically evaluate the
strengths and weaknesses of a narrative sermon (60 minutes).**

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to critically evaluate a narrative sermon by learning
from two narrative sermon examples.

Procedures:

- The facilitator will ask a few participants to read the Robinson sermon (10
minutes).

- Then, the facilitator will lead the class in discussion so that each participant will be able to discern critically the strengths and the weaknesses of the sermon (20 minutes).
- After that, the facilitator will ask several participants to read the Mathewson sermon. Each participant will be a character that is in the sermon (15 minutes).
- Then, the facilitator will divide the class into two groups and ask them to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the sermon (15 minutes).

Concepts:

- By looking at two sermon examples and evaluating them critically, participants will have a picture of an ideal narrative sermon.

Resources:

- Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* 161-175 (Steven D. Mathewson's narrative sermon "The Greatest Thing You Can Do for Your Kids").
- Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*, 204-214 (Haddon W. Robinson's narrative sermon "Our Fathers who are on Earth").

Goal 2: Participants will be able to compose a narrative sermon (45 minutes).

Objectives:

- Participants will improve their ability to compose an Old Testament narrative sermon.

Procedures:

- All participants will continue to compose their sermons in the library and the facilitator will be ready to help them.

Concepts:

- Knowledge practiced will produce better skills.

Assignments:

- Participants must complete their narrative sermons to be delivered in front of the class in the next session.

Closing:

- The facilitator will explain to all participants the procedures of the preaching practice in session VIII.

SESSION VIII: "Practicing Narrative Preaching"

Duration: Depending on the number of participants

Goals:

1. Participants will be able to preach an Old Testament narrative using the narrative approach.

Detailed Lesson Plan

Goal 1: Participants will be able to preach an Old Testament narrative using the narrative approach (depending on the number of participants).

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to preach an Old Testament narrative using the narrative approach

Procedures:

- Every participant has 15 minutes to deliver his/her sermon.
- As each participant delivers her/his sermon, others, including the facilitator, will give her/his evaluation on an evaluation form that has been provided by the facilitator. Evaluation is focused on the content of the message, including plot, dialogue, creativity, writing style, and clarity of the “Big Idea,” etc. Evaluation does not focus on the way the participant delivers the sermon.
- After each participant completes her/his preaching, everyone can give his/her input, so that the learning process can involve all participants.
- At the end of the class, evaluation forms of all participants will be collected by the facilitator and be given to the participants.

Concepts:

- A combination of knowledge practiced and evaluation from others will produce better skills.

Resources:

- Evaluation forms
- Camera recorder and camera man

Assignments:

- Having practiced preaching, each participant will have an opportunity to revise his/her sermon and he/she has to submit the sermon to the facilitator by email no later than 2 days after the presentation.

CHAPTER V

THE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Before the closing of the course, I asked the participants to give an evaluation on my teaching. The goal of the evaluation is to give me some feedback for teaching improvement and to promote professional learning.

Evaluation Form

The evaluation form is as follows:

Level of assessment you give		Very Poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Good
Facilitator						
1.	The facilitator was knowledgeable about the subject.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	The facilitator were well prepared for the sessions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	The facilitator explained the topics clearly and systematically.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	The facilitator made the course interesting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The facilitator was enthusiastic about the teaching the subject.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	The facilitator encouraged all participants to take part in class discussions, ask questions and/or express opinions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The facilitator responded well to the participants' questions and opinion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	The facilitator never intimidated or embarrassed participants.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	The facilitator was available and helpful to every participants.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 10. | The facilitator used time effectively during the class periods. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|

Course content

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 11. | The goals of the course were clearly defined. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. | The course achieved its goals. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. | The content was organized and easy to follow. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. | The length of the course was appropriate to cover content. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. | The course provided a new information. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Materials

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 16. | The materials supported the achievement of its goal. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. | The materials helped the participants in understanding the subject was being discussed. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. | The materials enhanced the capabilities and skills of the participants. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Teaching Methods

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 19. | The handouts provided were helpful. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. | Well organized and clear. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. | Interesting and not boring. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. | Using a variety of teaching methods. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. | Using a variety in the instructional media (ie. Print, video, slides, interactive and experiential). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. | The schedule for the course provided sufficient time to cover all the proposed activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25. | Effectiveness of practice exercises | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26. | Pace of instruction (neither too fast nor too slow) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. | Quality of assignments | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Facility

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 28. | The location for the course was convenient. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|

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|-----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 29. | The meeting room and related facilities were adequate and comfortable. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30. | The tools and equipments during the sessions worked well. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. | Overall quality of the course | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please write any additional comments, suggestions concerning the course

1. Which parts of the session did you find most useful?

2. Which parts of the session did you find least useful?

3. Any suggestions for how the session could be improved?

4. What additional course do you require to prepare you as a homiletics teacher?

The Result of the Evaluation

The result of the evaluation form is as follows:

	Level of assessment you give	Very Poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Good
	Facilitator					
1.	The facilitator was knowledgeable about the subject.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	2
2.	The facilitator were well prepared for the sessions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	4	3
3.	The facilitator explained the topics clearly and systematically.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	3
4.	The facilitator made the course interesting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	7	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The facilitator was enthusiastic about the teaching the subject.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8
6.	The facilitator encouraged all participants to take part in class discussions, ask questions and/or express opinions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The facilitator responded well to the participants' questions and opinion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	The facilitator never intimidated or embarrassed participants.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	1
9.	The facilitator was available and helpful to every participants.	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	5	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	The facilitator used time effectively during the class periods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	6	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Course content					
11.	The goals of the course were clearly defined.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	7
12.	The course achieved its goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	The content was organized and easy to follow.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	The length of the course was appropriate to cover content.	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	3	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	The course provided a new information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	7

Materials						
16.	The materials supported the achievement of its goal.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	The materials helped the participants in understanding the subject was being discussed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	3
18.	The materials enhanced the capabilities and skills of the participants.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching Methods						
19.	The handouts provided were helpful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8
20.	Well organized and clear.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	1
21.	Interesting and not boring.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	7	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	Using a variety of teaching methods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	4	2
23.	Using a variety in the istructional media (ie. Print, video, slides, interactive and experential).	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	4	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.	The schedule for the course provided sufficient time to cover all the proposed activities.	2	5	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25.	Effectiveness of practice exercises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	6	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.	Pace of instruction (neither too fast nor too slow)	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	4	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
27.	Quality of assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	3
Facility						
28.	The location for the course was convenient.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8
29.	The meeting room and related facilities were adequate and comfortable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	7
30.	The tools and equipments during the sessions worked well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	1
31.	Overall quality of the course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	5	2

Analysis of Evaluation

Facilitator

Overall, the evaluation of my teaching performance was quite good. I am highly valued in content mastery (question #1), teaching preparation (question #2), the ability to teach the topic well (question #3) and design the course in an interesting way (question #4). Furthermore, my attitude in responding to participants' questions (question #7) and opinions is considered respectful (question #8). Likewise, my enthusiasm for teaching the subject is highly valued (question #5).

However, there are two issues that needed my attention. First, on the question #9, availability and helpfulness, 25 percent of the participants valued it at poor, 62.5 percent said it was adequate, and 12.5 percent rated it good. The result surprised me because I did not realize the class had gone that way. Nevertheless, it provided good feedback to improve my teaching. The lower than expected scores may reflect that I was too material-oriented while teaching the course. In the lesson plan, I allocated enough time to help participants who found the subject being discussed too hard to understand. However, this allocated time was not enough for them. It indicates that I did not sufficiently recognize their diverse abilities. In the future, it will be better to use a more detailed registration form to collect more of the participants' data.

Second, on the question #10, using time effectively during the class periods, I also need to pay attention. I must acknowledge that even though time was allotted for class activities, often, I was not good at sticking to the time. In some sessions, I

taught very long. As a result, other activities ran too short. Therefore, I have learned that I have to use the class time more effectively.

Course Content

The evaluations provided by the participants that related to course content scored “good” and “very good.” Responses to question #11—the goal of the course had been defined clearly and the content—was so organized and easy to follow that the course reached the intended goal. Moreover, on the question #15, all of the participants mentioned that the course has provided them with new insights to preach Old Testament narratives. The length of the course was considered too short (question #14). For some participants, it was hard for them to learn a new and significant subject in such a short period of time. Therefore, in the future it may be better to design a similar course to run five days so that participants can have adequate time to master the materials.

Materials

Combined responses from questions 16-18 reveal that course material was “very good.” Participants assumed that all the materials supported the achievement of the course objectives and helped them understand the subject that was being discussed. In addition, they appreciated that the materials helped them to develop their capabilities and skills in teaching preaching.

Teaching Methods

Almost 30 percent of the questions were concerned with teaching methods. I intentionally did this because I expected more detailed feedback to improve my teaching methods. Evaluation of my teaching methods was varied. Some aspects of the methodology were scored with less satisfied. First, participants' responses on question #24, which is about the time provided to cover all required activities, scored low. Regarding the scores, 25 percent of the participants said the time were "very inadequate," 62.5 percent said "inadequate," and 12.5 percent said adequate. It seemed some participants found it difficult to complete all of the assignments in the given period of time. The result indicated that I need to reconsider all the assignments according to the allocated time.

Another less satisfied evaluation was on the pace of instruction (question #26). Of the participants, 37.5 percent stated it was "very poor," 50 percent said "adequate," and 12.5 percent scored it "good." Seemingly, for some of the participants, I gave instructions too quickly. It might be that the material was new for them and they hoped I taught with a slower pace. This was helpful feedback for me. Had I realized this issue during the course, I might have changed the lesson plan. Again, my narrowed focus on the materials may have caused this. Another area (question #19, 20, 22, 25, 27), such as handout, organization of the teaching methods, variety of teaching methods, effectiveness of practice exercises, and quality of assignments were assessed as "good" and "very good."

Facility

Combined responses from questions 28-31 asserts that almost all participants were satisfied with the facilities provided. They considered it to be a place conducive to learning.

Overall, 25 percent of participants gave a very good assessment for the course, 62.5 percent said “good,” and 12.5 percent mentioned “fair.”

Comments and Suggestions from the Participants Concerning the Course

1. Which parts of the session did you find most useful?

50 percent of the participants said that the most useful session of the course was the third session, namely “Grasping the ‘Big Idea’ of an Old Testament narrative text.” This was simply because they had never been trained in proper and accurate exegesis. They were not sure how to exegete a biblical text. After attending the session, they knew how to follow properly execute the exegetical steps. Pertinent to this thing, I have predicted it. Generally, almost all Indonesian pastors and homiletics teachers consider exegesis to be a confusing subject. This is the reason I designed one session specifically to discuss how to get the exegetical idea of a narrative text. The remaining 50 percent said that the most useful session was the fifth session, namely “Composing the plot of a narrative sermon.” For them, this was a new thing that helped them understand how to apply the knowledge they learned into practice.

2. Which parts of the session did you find least useful?

Almost all participants explained that none of the sessions was least useful. The result of the evaluation delighted me. At least, I felt that the class design met the participants' needs, and the goal was reached.

3. Any suggestions for how the session could be improved?

Suggestions collected from participants:

- The length of the course needs to be extended, more than 4 days
- Providing more time to do all assignments
- Teaching at a slower pace
- Giving more time for personal consultation
- Teaching more creatively
- Participants may have the materials before the course starts
- At the end of the course, the facilitator should preach by using narrative approach the same narrative text which had been preached deductively in the beginning of the course.

4. What additional course do you require to prepare you as a homiletics teacher?

- All participants requested that there be a continuation course on narrative sermon delivery.
- The majority of participants proposed a course on preaching Jesus' parables.

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